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S. H. 1829

TREATISE

ON THE

TRUTH AND INSPIRATION

OF THE

OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT.

IN TWO PARTS.

CHIEFLY

FROM THE FRENCH OF M. JAQUELOT.

BY

WILHELMINA ANTOINETTE BINGHAM.

“ All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable
for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in
righteousness.” 2 TIM. iii. 16.

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INTRODUCTION.

IN presenting this small volume to the attention of my friends, and of the public in general, I feel that it is incumbent on me to offer a few words, in the shape of explanation, as to the method which I have pursued with regard to the original work. To M. Jaquelot I acknowledge I am altogether indebted for those powerful arguments, which I am enabled to use in the following pages, for the support of holy writ. Having said this, I trust I shall not be accused of temerity in acknowledging, that after I had translated *literally* the “*Traité de la Verité et de l’Inspiration des Livres du Vieux et du Nouveau Testament*,” I found it necessary to recompose it; considerably abridging some parts, and altering others, while I endeavoured carefully to retain the true sense of the author. I have also added, together with some few remarks of my own, various passages of Scripture, which appeared to me to give considerable weight to the arguments of M. Jaquelot.

In the whole of this undertaking, my earnest wish has been to seek the glory of God; and in so doing, to put the work into such a shape that it may readily find readers, even among those who are to be considered as forming the unlettered part of mankind. With this object in view, I have tried, as much as possible, to divest my book of the digressive and prolix style of the original, without swerving from those clear principles of truth which are established and enforced by the

pious writer. How far I have succeeded, is not for me to determine. I do not presume to claim the praise of the learned ; I do not expect to receive the approbation of the critic ; but I most earnestly desire to be permitted the privilege of becoming an humble instrument, in the hands of Providence, for proving the Divine truth of the Bible : and looking to Him for help, in whose hands are the understandings both of the proud and the humble, of the lowly and the noble, I have endeavoured to make this small volume, " all things to all men," that it might " by any means " be instrumental to the teaching of some. In these days of scepticism and infidelity, even the feeblest voice should be raised in support of the truth of God's word : weak as my efforts are, they may not be altogether useless. If God should vouchsafe to bless them, he alone knows to what extent they may be beneficial in raising a spirit of pious inquiry in the minds of some who have never before entertained one serious or truly religious sentiment ; in leading others, who are entirely ignorant of the contents of the Bible, to turn to the revealed word itself, and in it to listen to the voice of Him, who, in the glorious Unity of the Godhead, and Trinity of Persons, is the Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier of mankind.

In the Preface to the original French Edition, we are taught, that M. Jaquelot, my truly Scriptural guide, who was the Protestant Preacher in the King of Prussia's Chapel, at the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth century, had appeared in the character of an author

before. He had been a zealous advocate for the truth in a more voluminous treatise on The Existence of God, addressed to the infidel world in general; and in another on the Messiah, addressed to the Jews in particular. The treatise, from which I have drawn so much of the contents of this volume, appears to have been written some time subsequently to the other two; and, in fact, was not published till after his death in 1708. We also learn from the Preface, that M. Jaquelot having expired, before this work was revised and corrected by himself, it was published precisely in the way in which he left it, with the exception of the last chapter of the second part *; his friends having considered it as most advisable not to make any other alteration in it. This will be a still further apology for my venturing to abridge the writings of so pious and learned a man, and making rather a paraphrase than a translation of the work in question.

Having said thus much, I trust that I shall meet with every indulgence, as to my deviations from the French; among which I must acknowledge the introduction of some remarks with regard to the final restoration of Israel, as on that part of the Prophetical writings my author was almost

* The last chapter in the *Traité de la Verité*, &c. we are informed by the writer of the French Preface, was not written by M. Jaquelot, but added after his death; he having been known to have intended to conclude the work in question with some remarks on the subject, which occupies that portion of the book. That this was his intention, may be gathered from many passages in the work itself, as well as from the assertions of the writer of the French Preface.

entirely silent. In these days of pious inquiry respecting this subject, I found it impossible to do other than call the attention of the reader to it by some few observations, but especially by references to particular parts of Scripture.

Before I conclude this address, I request permission to acknowledge with gratitude the condescension of those exalted individuals, and the kindness of *all* those, who by becoming subscribers to this volume, have encouraged me to commit it to the press.

It only remains for me to ask for the prayers of every pious person who peruses the following pages, that, so far as they are consistent with God's word, and conducive to the glory of the Lamb, who was slain for the sins of many, their contents may sink deeply into the hearts of those who read them, and produce the fruits of an earnest seeking after heavenly wisdom. I beg leave to dedicate this small volume

TO EVERY SINCERE SEARCHER AFTER
DIVINE TRUTH,
TO ALL THOSE WHO DESIRE TO BE TAUGHT OF
THE SPIRIT OF GOD,
AND THROUGH GRACE TO FIND IN THE BIBLE
THE WAY TO
EVERLASTING LIFE AND PEACE.

I remain their humble and devoted servant,
WILHELMINA A. BINGHAM.

Vicarage, Hale Magna, near Sleaford,
Lincolnshire, April 2, 1829.

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ERRATA.

- Page 2, line 26 : *for are, read were*
 8, — 6 : *for religion, read religión*
 50, — 12 : *for but, read before*
 59, — 24 : *for this read their*
 74, note † : *for Psalm ix. 1, read ix. 16*
 90, line 7 : *for o, read of*
 98, — 20 : *for die, read died*
 111, note : *insert Gen. xiii. 16 ; xv. 5 ; xxvi. 4 ; xxviii. 13, 14*
 112, — * : *for Gen. xlix. read xlviii.*
 135, — † : *for Joshua vi. 2, read vi. 22*
 138, — : *for Judges vi. 25, read vi. 24*
 152, line 8 : *for to the ground, read upon the earth*
 256, — 4 : *for Scribes and Pharisees, read Scribes*
 296, — 3 : *for unto, read on*

ON THE
TRUTH AND INSPIRATION
OF THE
OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT.

CHAPTER I.

GENERAL REFLECTIONS ON THE CONDUCT OF
THE INFIDEL WITH REGARD TO RELIGION.

IT may with truth be remarked of the human mind, that it has naturally an inclination towards a worship of some sort. Man's reason teaches him, that there must be a Being of more power than he has himself, to whom honour is due; and his self-love leads him to believe, that the benefits, which he may obtain by propitiating this Being, are not to be despised or rejected.

This bent of our nature has been more or less conspicuous in all ages, from the earliest antiquity to the present day: and the history of every nation teaches us, that people have been continually led

to practise the most extravagant and even the cruellest superstitions, rather than forego religion altogether.

This natural acknowledgment of a superior Being having been so nearly universal in the human race, is of itself a sufficient answer to those who affect to despise and disbelieve *that* religion which the Bible teaches us. If religion be natural to man, it is only consistent that God should give man a revelation of his will, that he may worship him in a manner suitable to his glory.

Clear and convincing as this argument seems to be, we know, alas ! that the world contains many persons weak enough to deny its force, and to glory in their infidelity ; hoping by this to distinguish themselves as people of superior genius, and great understanding. With what shame would they be covered, if they could be closely interrogated on their knowledge of religion, and upon their reasons for despising it ! I am well assured that the greatest number of those, who deny Revelation, do not know, much less can they tell, why they reject it. The sacred Book alone can furnish the true reason for by far the greater number of unbelievers : “ Men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil*.”

It is not necessary to prove by argument, or

* John iii. 19.

demonstration, that the chain of piety presses as a heavy weight on the natural heart: our own experience fully justifies the assertion; and we know, that bad example and profane discourse will insensibly spread irreligion over the souls of those who live carelessly, without reflection, and far from God; more especially, when that example comes from persons distinguished by birth, by fortune, or by rank, it carries with it a most powerful sway: and that man, who would not implicitly follow the advice of his lawyer, even to obtain a trifling patrimony, will yield himself madly to the voice of the infidel in matters affecting the great interests of his soul, and will suffer himself to be easily persuaded out of his heavenly inheritance. Oh! that men would consider the value of their immortal Being, and ask themselves earnestly the question, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*"

There are, it may perhaps be said, many people of learning and other persons, who have really strong understandings, and yet who have little or no religion. This, alas! is too true. But whether they are people of sense, philosophers or learned men, it signifies not to us. Some of the most distinguished of mankind, for mental talent and ability, are often guided by so little appearance of

* Mark viii. 37.

reason, even in the common occurrences of life, that a person would sadly betray his own interest by doing at all times what he sees them do, without examining the motives of their conduct. And let us remember, when religion is in question, the more sense and knowledge a man has, the more clear and convincing the arguments ought to be, with which we should permit him to influence us. Now, with all their sense and knowledge, we do not find that philosophers in any age have been able to produce reasons against religion, which are sufficient for its renunciation. Their arguments against it have been invariably weak, poor, and unsatisfactory ; while, on the contrary, those in favour of its Divine authority are, to every upright mind, most demonstrative and convincing.

The greatest difficulty, which the unbeliever has been able to raise against religion, rests upon that infinity, which overwhelms the imagination, and which is so much above the narrow limits of the human mind, that our reason can hardly avoid contradicting itself when we enter upon this incomprehensible subject. But this is not wonderful ; this is no evidence in favour of infidelity. Let us remember, that the mind is often at a loss even in the consideration of the commonest sciences. If then there are many things above our comprehension among those with which we are surrounded in life ; if infinity is beyond the reach of human

conception, when the understanding only exerts itself to consider it in connection with the duration and extension of body, the divisibility of matter, and the production of motion ; would it be just or reasonable to abandon religion, because the idea of God, that infinite Being, infinitely powerful and infinitely perfect, gives birth to some notions which our finite minds cannot comprehend ?

Another argument of incredulity rests on the fact, that God is not visible to man. If we drive the infidel to his last defence, he must of necessity come to this as the very centre of atheism ; but a single reflection on the nature of thought entirely refutes this objection.—Thought is not visible to the eye, and has no perceptible connection with the atoms of which our bodies are composed. We know also, that the mind has its peculiar subjects, often distinct from those of the imagination : it comprehends shape and figure in general with more ease than the imagination represents to itself a square or an ellipsis. Yet none of this is within the reach of our sight.

But it is of little use to waste our time on those who *will* bewilder themselves in errors of such absurdity : do they doubt there being a cause for the flux and reflux of the sea, or for the effect of the loadstone ; although they do not understand either of these with any certainty ? What injustice and folly then is it to doubt the existence of God,

when so many works, so many events, so many proofs, lead us, as it were by the hand, to Him.

Though the unbeliever should attempt to justify his denial of God in various ways, yet I verily believe it may be considered as a principle, which need seldom be swerved from, that ignorance of revelation and the indulgence of the corrupt passions of the human heart are the great causes of impiety. These are the infectious sources from which the venom of irreligion springs.—A naturally vicious heart, and a life spent in every criminal excess are terrible obstacles to the soul: and, on the other side, a soul scarcely enlightened at all, and not exercised in any of the matters of its faith, is not prepared to offer much resistance to a heart drawn aside and enchained by the pleasures of the world. Without a knowledge of God, and without piety, how should the soul do other than blindly suffer itself to be carried away by the torrent, and finally become a willing slave to a vicious and corrupted heart?

But we will now leave this part of the argument, and endeavour to establish some incontrovertible principles, by which the inquiring mind may be assisted and directed in its search after truth. The first is, that after this life we must necessarily be either annihilated, or eternally happy, or eternally miserable. With regard to annihilation, I shall shew the absurdity of that idea in a future

chapter, wherein I shall prove the immortality of the soul by arguments independent of revelation. If then the soul can never be reduced to annihilation, it cannot avoid one or other of the two states, eternal happiness or eternal misery : and let us remember, that there is nothing between us and that happiness or misery, but this mortal life ; this life of a few short and fleeting years, or months, or days, or perhaps only of a few hours. In such uncertainty as to the moment of the arrival of that death, which must open to us one or other of these scenes of eternity, prudence, nay, common sense must dictate to us, that we ought to lose no time in making choice wisely of our part.

The second principle is not less certain than the first. Since we are between two states so opposed to each other, as eternal happiness to hope for, and eternal misery to dread ; the least ray of reason, the smallest spark of self-love, leads toward happiness. This is a choice, which any one without hesitation will make, especially when convinced that this happiness is no chimera, no being of idea, no creation of the imagination. Now it is beyond all contradiction, that the proofs in favour of this happiness are unequalled both in power and number.—But suppose, on the other hand, that they were only founded on conjecture and probabilities ; we must necessarily examine the nature and number of these suppositions ; and if

they should prove to be on each side equal, the balance ought still to be in favour of religion. But let us imagine, that there is only one probable reason in favour of piety, against ten for unbelief; still prudence persuades us to take the part of religion, because the blessings, which she proposes, are infinitely more considerable than the pleasures to be abandoned in exchange for her gifts. For what in reality does he renounce, who quits sin for the sake of holiness? He gives up, it is true, many criminal indulgences; he quits those excesses, which only injured his health; and he renounces the idle vanities and lying pleasures of the world, which brought him no solid happiness.—Surely the advantage of this conduct is in itself considerable enough; however small the hope or the probability of a happiness beyond the grave might be. Who would not cast away a worthless burden, that he might seek diligently for a concealed treasure! who would not readily sacrifice an inconsiderable sum, for the possibility of obtaining innumerable riches! Let us carry the idea yet further. False pleasures, the pleasures of sin, leave a deep and lasting sting behind them: they have, almost inevitably, a sorrowful termination; they often destroy health and shorten life. If the amazing number of those could be known whom dissipation has laid in the tomb, it would readily be acknowledged that pain is the inseparable companion of

crime. Another sure and lamentable consequence of sin is the remorse of conscience, which it eventually brings on its followers.—It may perhaps be answered, that these fears originate in the slavish prejudices, to which religion gives birth; and that they would vanish, as soon as she should be altogether abandoned. I reply, that this is in the highest degree a false and groundless supposition. Before the mind can be entirely delivered from the remorse of conscience, it must be fully and clearly proved, that *there is no God*; consequently since this has not been done, nor can it be done, this remorse is just, reasonable, and well-founded.

The infidel, who audaciously boasts of his belief that there is no God, would become instantly motionless and pale with terror, if he were compelled to draw for a ticket, on which *death* was written; even though there were in the same depository twenty others, which he had an equal chance of obtaining. Here then are twenty arguments to combat the existence of God, with one only to establish the fact; but that one would be found powerful enough to silence every assertion of the Atheist.

What then is the infidel? Have we not already described what he is; generally a man who gives the rein to his corrupt passions, and consumes his days in criminality, holding himself up to the contempt of others in this life; and, when the hour

of death approaches, yielding to the remorse of conscience, and the secret terror of his soul. Of what value then are his past pleasures, his boasted days of fatal enjoyment? Where is now his rejection of all that is holy?

If there are other persons celebrated for their talents, their learning, their proficiency in elegant literature, or abstruse sciences, who are without religion; their proceeding is not the less contrary to good sense, because they appear to have superior understandings. In their rejection of piety, they are carried away by false notions and sinful pride, which lead them to despise what in their opinion is too trifling and too like superstition for minds so enlightened, as in vain conceit they imagine their own to be, to have any concern in. Thus they abandon religion without possessing any better reasons than those of the libertine for so doing; and considering themselves degraded by being placed on a footing with others in the exercises of devotion, they sacrifice every right feeling to the idea of obtaining a reputation for wit and knowledge beyond the rest of mankind!—Another reason for impiety is, that too frequently the manners of the world make the disregard of religion fashionable; and this perhaps is the strongest of all the pretended demonstrations of the infidel, or, at least, the one which acts with the most effect.

Having followed the libertine in his wanderings,

the philosopher in his pride, and the worldling in his vanity, it is now time to return to the question and pursue our subject regularly. It is important first to consider, whether the system of Atheism can be compared with that of Religion, either in evident proofs or in convincing arguments, in conjectures, in probabilities, or in truths. We have already said on which side we ought to determine, should the proofs for and against religion be equal; and right reason decrees most absolutely, that we should not hesitate to decide in favour of religion, when she opens to us so many advantages, even if we were to suppose for a moment, that impiety is more clearly established than religion; for tranquillity of mind, inseparable from virtue, is of itself sufficiently valuable to induce people to renounce unbelief and libertinism, which will inevitably lead to so much danger and shame; and because the hope of everlasting happiness is too important to be abandoned while we can discover even the smallest ground for its truth. It is sufficient, that this happiness should not be altogether impossible, to lead us diligently to seek it. A great prospective advantage, though the hope of obtaining it may be small, will keep reasonable people constantly on the watch, especially when they run no hazard by so doing, and when an opposite conduct might lead to an irreparable loss. But there can be no excuse for the mind to be in any degree equally

suspended between religion and impiety. Reason is entirely on the side of religion : every light, which she discovers to us, is ranged against infidelity : authority, demonstration metaphysical and moral ; argument, both solid and convincing ; conjectures and probabilities, all, all are arrayed on the side of religion.

Shall we be guided by authority ? Is it then the authority of numberless libertines, little more instructed on these subjects than the beasts that perish ? Or shall we be led by some individuals, gifted with great and extraordinary talents perhaps, though at the same time blinded by the pride of human attainments, who have no more than a superficial knowledge of that religion, which they presume to condemn ? Shall the authority of such as these be preferred to that of multitudes of learned and pious writers, of devout and holy martyrs, who have in every age been the advocates of true religion ? these men, who have meditated on its proofs, and borne afflictions, privations, and sufferings, and even death itself, to set their seal upon its truth ! Assuredly neither sense nor justice will suffer us to hesitate one moment.

As to conjectures and probable arguments, it is true, that if each of these were considered separately, no one of them might be sufficient to convince us ; but when they all encompass the same truth, as around a centre, every one acts as a brilliant ray : and when

thus united they form a light which approaches the full brightness of an irresistible demonstration. It is thus that they combine in true religion : not only many convincing proofs, but a multitude of probable arguments, join themselves to sustain the system of piety ; and against these the Atheist can oppose nothing except a few difficulties drawn from our want of knowledge of the nature of the Supreme Being, which neither attack nor shake in any degree the existence of God or the truth of religion. Is it for any one presumptuously to say, that religion is false because he cannot comprehend clearly all the actions of the Deity ? To do so is palpable absurdity and gross injustice.

With regard to demonstrations, they are of two kinds ; one founded upon the evidence, which the object itself affords, and upon the connection the effect has with the cause, which necessarily produces it. The other consists of facts, which have actually taken place, but which might or might not have happened, inasmuch as, out of the cause which produced them, it was not absolutely necessary in the nature of things that those effects should have arisen : for instance, eclipses are of the first class, because they are necessarily produced. We know, that, by the interposition of the earth between the sun and the moon, an eclipse of the moon is produced ; and by the interposition of the moon between the earth and the sun, we have an

eclipse of that great luminary. But in such facts as the following,—that there is a town in France which is called Paris; that Julius Cæsar formed the Roman Republic into an empire; or that Charles the Fifth was an emperor,—there are no demonstrations founded on the evidence which the object itself affords, because all these things have not necessarily come to pass, because these effects were not the consequences of any absolutely controlling cause. Those, who built Paris, might have left the ground unoccupied. Julius Cæsar need not have altered the government of Rome; and Charles the Fifth might never have been elected emperor. Nevertheless no one attempts to deny these facts; they have their clear and decided proofs; and we are as well convinced of them as of the truth of an eclipse.

Now religion possesses these two kinds of facts, and she affords also the clearest demonstration of both. Many wonderful acts of the Almighty are related in the Holy Scriptures. We shall establish the truth of them by arguments of much more force, and in far greater number, than any which can be brought forward to prove, that Julius Cæsar or Charles the Fifth did once exist. Is it not then the height of injustice to give credence to these historical relations, while we reject those which are to be found in the sacred writings? He, who believes in history of any kind, must then,

if only to escape the charge of inconsistency, acknowledge the truth of revelation. The very foundation of religion consists of truths, which are susceptible of the clearest demonstrations, as certain as those of an eclipse; and are, properly speaking, no other than the consequences of the principles which we have here laid down.

I shall reduce these truths into two propositions, which are, first, *That there is a God*; secondly, *That the soul of man is spiritual, and consequently immortal.*

These two assertions being proved, where is the person, who can, for an instant, doubt the truth of Revelation?

CHAPTER II.

ON THE EXISTENCE OF GOD.

THE existence of a Supreme Being has been so amply discussed in the numerous dissertations which have been composed on the subject, and it has been so completely proved that such a belief is in perfect conformity with right reason, that I shall content myself with retracing in few words some of the most powerful arguments in its favour.

It is indisputable, that there is a Being *self-existent*, and perfectly independent of all other beings. This proves itself by the following clear demonstration.—We know, and see, that there are numerous bodies both animate and inanimate ; some of these being capable of motion, such as men, animals, &c., while others discover only vegetative powers, such as plants, trees, and many other substances : among all these we are not acquainted with one, which is not subject to destruction, or liable to decay. Now, can we believe, can we imagine, that this would be the case, if they each contained within them an independent, self-existent power ? If we admit, that these bodies do not

contain any such power, then they can only exist at all, by the influence of some Cause more powerful than they are themselves : and if we do not allow this Cause to be a Being of self-existent power, we shall fall into manifest contradictions ; for even though we may speak of being beyond being, till the powers of reason are lost in endless calculation, in fact, we shall be saying the same thing ; and by admitting a still more powerful Being beyond all those, though we may refuse to acknowledge it in so many words, we do allow of a Being of self-existent power, independent of any other cause whatever, at once producing those effects with which we are acquainted.

Then there is a *Being self-existent*. Let us proceed to another demonstration. Has this Being intelligence, or has it not ? If this Being has not intelligence, from whence does man, that being *who cannot even exist by his own power*—from whence does man, I say, derive his understanding ; how is he able to procure to himself intellect ? An effect has nothing belonging to it, which it does not receive from the cause which produces it. This, we must remember, is one of the first principles of reasoning ; and a most clear and certain axiom it is. Since then, *nothing* can only produce *nothing*, human intellect must necessarily have a First Cause from whence it is derived ; and what

other cause can this be, if not that Being who exists by his own power? It is to this we must return; for we cannot imagine the slightest effect without a sufficient cause to produce it. And intellect, the noblest of all effects! can *that* which has itself no existence, can *nothing* be its cause? Common sense revolts at such an idea. We are then compelled to admit, by the most powerful demonstration, that there is an intelligent as well as a self-existent Being; or, in other words, that there is a God, such as we believe him to be. The infidel must either destroy these proofs, by opposing them with others equally strong; or he must acknowledge that the part, which he has gloried in taking, is that of folly and desperation.

To these we will add other arguments, which also have their weight. Has the world subsisted from all eternity? Or has it been produced *by chance*, without any directing cause? Or was it formed by an all-powerful intelligent Being? Let us discuss these three subjects of inquiry deliberately: one or other of these systems must be true.

Now, it is quite clear that the system of an omnipotent, intelligent Creator explains infinitely better than either of the others the formation of the universe; and it, at the same time, disengages the mind from many difficulties, into which each of them would lead it: then assuredly this is the

system which we ought readily to follow, when in so doing we act agreeably to common sense and the soundest reason.

The existence of the world from eternity, is a supposition which reason does not sanction, and which demonstration cannot sustain. It is opposed not only by all the information which the history of the world from the earliest ages gives us, but, by all the calculations, which we are able to make, of the increase of population, no less than by the daily discovery of fresh arts and sciences. Those philosophers, who have professed to believe the world eternal, have been led into such erroneous opinions by not having any fixed idea of the Creator; although they attributed to Him infinite power, they also embarrassed themselves with many vain questions; such as, What the Deity was employed in before he made the world, if that really had a beginning? If the infidel, of this day, will still encumber himself with such vain questions, we can only lament that he obstinately prefers darkness to light, at the expense of his eternal salvation.

The world could not have been thrown together by chance, as the Materialist asserts: such a system, if we consider it for a moment, we shall find equally full of absurdity. If motion be essential to matter, then the one cannot be separated from the other; no bodily substance can be, on that supposition, devoid of motion: now, we well know,

that such is not the case. The idea of matter is not, necessarily, accompanied by that of motion, which undoubtedly it ought to be, if motion were the essence of matter. Then, if motion be not essential to matter, it follows that motion is produced elsewhere. In this behold a *cause* ! a Being clearly distinguished from matter, which impresses motion on it at pleasure. If the world had been produced by a blind unintelligent cause, it follows that we should not have been able to discover the remotest appearance of plan in the formation of any being. If the world had been formed *by chance*, the animals might have sprung from the earth, as the plants do. Why should this not be the case. If man, I speak of man as a being who reasons and thinks, came at first from the bowels of the earth, without any directing intelligent Cause to form him, why do not we meet with beings, of the intellectual powers of man, yet of bodily forms wholly different from each other? Why have not some *three eyes* or *four arms*? which would not interfere with the powers of either reasoning or speaking. But, notwithstanding the various qualities of the soil, men are of the same general make and shape every where; the interior and exterior are the same in all; and any variation from this is considered as a deformity. This is, of itself, a proof that man has not been formed by blind chance, but that of whatever na-

tion he be, he is made of the same mould, by an intelligent Being; or, to speak with St. Paul, "That God hath made of one blood all nations of men *."

We entreat the reader to consider these arguments with the utmost attention; the nature of the soul will furnish us with many others equally powerful.

* Acts xvii. 26.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE NATURE OF THE SOUL OF MAN, FROM
WHICH IS DRAWN A FURTHER PROOF OF THE
EXISTENCE OF GOD.

THE soul is immaterial : there is neither mixture, mass, composition nor assemblage of parts in it. There is nothing in its nature capable of separation or division : consequently there is nothing destructible in it, because the destruction of any thing is brought about by the division of its parts.

We agree with the wisest of the heathen philosophers, when we affirm, that the soul is not a *substance* ; but these same philosophers were embarrassed in their expressions, when they came to define what was the true nature of that being, from whence ideas, reflections, negations and resolutions proceeded. That it was not a *mass*, they all agreed ; but some imagined it to consist of atoms, so fine and light, that they were not distinguishable. At this point these philosophers lost themselves, they could form no idea of an existence, having no connection with either matter or space.

Thoughts, reflections, affirmations, negations and resolves, we are assured, must necessarily have a cause which produces them, and a subject which sustains them. If we consider what this cause must be, we shall soon discover, that matter can form no part of it, however fine and delicate we may suppose the atoms of that matter to be; however rapid and extensive the motion, which we may allow it to possess. The finest and lightest bodies are essentially the same, are capable of receiving the same powers of motion as the most dense and heaviest. The distinction between small and great is founded only on their affinity with our senses, and not in any disagreement as to their essential qualities. Now it is certain, that, however large a body may be; however great its capability of motion; of whatever nature its component parts; a mere body, I repeat, has never produced one idea, one deliberation, or one decision. We have before said, that bodies, however small and light they may be, must still partake of the same nature as larger and heavier ones, because their properties are essentially the same; and if we were to allow, that matter is capable of thought at all, it must of necessity follow, that thought would be contained *in the essence of each minute atom*. If this were the case, it would be impossible to separate the one from the other. The atom would think at all times, and wherever it might happen

to be placed. What absurdity is there in such an idea! According to this, of what a number of *thinking atoms* a man would be composed!

Nor can we, for a moment, imagine, that atoms, which are not capable, separately, of producing a single idea, will be able to produce thought, when united in one mass to form the body of a human being; for what does such an assemblage add to each, except affinity and connection with other matter, equally incapable of thought. Any one, who reflects, will allow his body to be a mere machine, which a superior director employs at times, in certain functions, far nobler than those, which exclusively belong to the body.

All bodies, without exception, are more or less *substantial* and *tangible*. These qualities are essential to the nature of matter. Thus every idea, which we form of motion, shape, and action, as connected with matter, supposes substance and tangibility, and all reasoning on the subject must necessarily proceed on these principles.—Those persons, who have employed themselves in investigating the nature of matter, and the motion, which it is capable of receiving, have never, in their researches, met with any results, which could lead to the supposition, that thoughts, deliberations or resolutions, could form a part of it; but at every step they have been met by substance and tangible solidity. Every demonstration, every argument,

every mode of reasoning with regard to bodies in general will produce the same effects, will give the same results, as the human body supplies us with ; yet not one of the actions of the soul is to be perceived in any other material substance whatever, whether animate or inanimate.

Figure, shape, and motion, with all their countless varieties, and their multitudinous effects, still carry necessarily to the understanding a conception of substance and tangibility ; while, on the contrary, the actions of the soul, its ideas, its reflections, its judgments, its affirmations, negations, and resolves, not only do not lead us towards substance and tangibility, but they carry our thoughts further and further from them. The more we reason on the subject, the more we are convinced, that there is not the slightest connection between them and the ideas, which we have of the essential properties of matter.

Perhaps it may be asked, whether in all nature there is any other effect which so completely conceals from us its cause, and which is so entirely beyond our comprehension, as our own powers of thinking are. In reply, I would revert to an argument which I have already used on another subject. I do not perceive in the loadstone the cause which attracts the steel : I do not know with any certainty what produces the flux and reflux of the sea : but I am convinced that these

effects must either be produced by a superior cause acting upon them, or they must be the work of some Being, who has without any intermediate agent directed them by his power.

In all the actions of the soul nothing conveys to my mind the idea of matter. When I question any one of these actions in particular, if I may be allowed thus to express myself, they reject every notion which I can form of matter. How singular, nay, how incredible it is, that an effect should thus entirely disown its cause ! We are certain that our thoughts and judgments have not any connection with shape or figure : to say a round thought, or a square idea, would be perfectly ridiculous we know : yes or no, an affirmation or negation, are each in themselves indivisible : then there is neither substance, tangibility, figure, nor motion in thought ; consequently matter cannot be the cause of these actions ; for a genuine effect of any cause carries with it an essential affinity to the nature of that which produces it ; since any cause only acts by virtue of its essence, otherwise it would not be properly an *efficient* cause. Thus, if a body does not produce ideas, because it is composed of tangible matter, and capable of figure, it does not produce them *as a body* ; it is not, therefore, efficient for the production of them ; it is not, consequently, the true cause. We should deceive ourselves, by imagining that motion is capable of thought ; we

clearly see, that motion is only capable of changing the affinity of different bodies with each other; varying the situation of matter as it mixes with, or separates from, other proportions of it; altering the shape or place of any given body, without producing one single idea.

This appears still more evident by another reflection. Let us close our eyes for a moment, and admit that there is no such thing as body; that there is not any material substance: then let us form the idea of a square or a triangle, a direct or a circular motion, rapid or slow; if we do this, we shall perceive that the ground of any one of these ideas, the subject, which sustains them, must be a body. We cannot form any conception of figure or motion without, at the same time, admitting into our minds the idea of substance, or tangibility, or in other words *a body*; but if the supposition, that there is no such thing as matter, were real, we could readily, without the least difficulty, form very clear notions of our reasoning powers: we should not require the assistance, either of substance, tangibility, figure, shape, motion, mass, or atom. Thus we see, that the actions of the soul are discovered to us without borrowing our ideas from those which belong to the essence and properties of matter; and it follows, that they must arise from a principle superior to any material cause whatever.

We feel and know, that many ideas have their origin in the mind, from their connection with outward objects ; such as existence, non-existence, possibility or impossibility, contradiction, probability or doubt : but we also feel and know, that there is a cause within us capable of reasoning on these ideas ; which, by bringing them in opposition to each other, judges of the different relations which they possess, the one to the other, and the conformity or opposition there is between them.

This intellectual power within us, which calculates, which compares ideas, the one with the other ; which is capable of comprehending in that one word, *God !* the Creator of the universe ; the Maker of heaven and earth, and all which they contain ; which beholds in one glance, void and space, mass and matter ; which, with perfect ease, glides into the future ; or which, with equal celerity, brings the past into the same view with the present. This intellectual power, this eternal existence within us, for we feel it to be so, must be of a nature distinguished essentially from all bodily substance ; inasmuch as it has a power and actions so different from, and superior to matter, of whatsoever kind its component parts may be. The soul within the human body, with regard to its ideas, may be, not inaptly, compared to a painter in his chamber, examining and arranging his pictures.

In those constituted signs in use among mankind to make themselves intelligible to each other ; such as speech, writing, or any other given sign ; we clearly see the superiority of the soul over the body, and the difference which exists, between that which is essential to matter, and that which is immaterial : in all cases we find these to be as disproportioned to each other, as the word of God is to what the soul comprehends in that single term. For instance ; a fire lighted on the top of a hill, or the height of a tower, may convey to the mind of the leader of an army, that the place is besieged and in imminent danger of being compelled to surrender. Let us search as far as we please into the nature of any appointed sign, whether by word or figure, and we shall discover as much difference between the being which reasons within the human body, and the actions of that body itself, as between the fire on the hill or tower, and the idea, which it gives birth to in the mind of the General, that the place is ready to surrender.

With regard to the will of man, we shall from that source, in as few words as we can, draw a further proof in favour of our argument. I move my finger ; I do it, not from any natural impulse, but because it is my will to do so. This action is entirely voluntary on my part : in it, then, we have not only a convincing proof of the na-

ture of the soul, but of the existence of God ; for I feel, and am thoroughly persuaded, that my finger moves or remains still, according to my pleasure, and that my will is the origin of the movement. I am convinced, by my own feelings, that this indifferent action is determined by my will alone ; and that it has power to change its determination in an instant. Then, as by this it is proved, that there are in nature beings actuated by will in various matters, it is not difficult to believe, that the one self-existent, intelligent Being, from whom all other beings derive their existence, from whom man obtains his intellect, is capable of doing *every thing* by will, or, to use a more proper expression, is *omnipotent*. But to reason a little further on the subject of will,—we admit, that to act by the will is to act by the knowledge of the power which one has so to act ; and this knowledge the body cannot be possessed of, for we have before proved, that knowledge is not a component part of matter. To act by will also consists in a perfect freedom of action, without being determined on or acted upon by any other cause ; but it is clear, that the motion of every species of matter is produced, by its following the impression which it has received, without having in itself the least capability of altering its course. As soon as any given body receives an impulse capable of carrying it

through any given space, the impression necessarily produces the effect. Should we not consider it as a miracle, if a ball, which had been driven by a blow towards the East, should retrace its track towards the West, without having received any different impulse. It is surely, then, against reason to believe, that all the variations, which I make at discretion, in the movements of my hands, or of any of my fingers, are made only by the motion of these members themselves, which motion is necessarily impressed on them without any assistance of my will. But it is entirely in conformity with the experience, the feeling, and the knowledge which we have of ourselves, to admit a direction in all these actions guided only by will. It is readily allowed, that the human body is a machine composed of many thousand springs; which are susceptible of numberless impressions from outward causes, which consequently produce many different movements: but, in the example proposed as above, the arbitrary movement of a finger, it cannot be denied, and our own feelings convince us, that the will is the first principle of the action; wherefore it amounts to a demonstration, that there are in the universe beings, who act solely and entirely by will, and are consequently not material. I only desire then to be answered with candour: Is it not more reasonable to consider the body, in many of its ac-

tions, as making known some of the thousand, thousand ideas, thoughts and reflections, which are generated in the soul of man, rather than to believe it only impressed with blind motion. I will not here argue whether my will is the true cause, or only the occasional cause, of the motion of my finger; of what consequence is it, whether this motion is the proper effect, or the simple result of my will? But we must necessarily agree either, that the will acts effectually on the body, or that there must be in the universe a Cause superior to the will, which fulfils all its desires the instant that they are formed. Thus, which ever way we turn, in pursuing the subject, we arrive at the same conclusion: we fully admit the existence of a Being who acts solely by will. Shall any one pretend to assert, that the body has been regulated, from the commencement of its existence, *necessarily* to produce, by virtue of its springs, all those, the least of those motions, which the will directs; and that the soul has been united to the body, to have also, at the same instant, a perception and a will in perfect agreement with every motion, with which the body has been from its first formation so impressed!

If the infidel agrees to such a system as this, I would only ask him further to inform me, who is the author of this beautiful, harmonious, and perfect union? For, indisputably we behold in it a

composition which supposes, in its invention and execution, to the full as much intelligence and power as we see displayed in all the other wonders of the glorious universe; and thus he, who consents to it, is compelled at the same time to acknowledge the existence of God. But this system does not altogether appear in conformity either with reason or experience. First, there are many movements, which take place in the human body, entirely independent of our will. Secondly, if the soul has within itself both knowledge and will which develop themselves at the same instant in which the body acts, from whence comes it, that one feels and knows that one is able to act according to one's inclination? From whence comes that idea of dependence and subordination of the body to the will, if these two are so entirely equal? And if they act with collateral power, what spring relaxes? What part is in motion to produce in the soul that idea, I am able to raise my finger if I will, but I will not? How does this motion agree with the will, when, for example, one most sincerely wishes to lift up the arm, and when one is prevented by some dislocation or strain, of the nature of which one is ignorant? But it is not necessary to extend the subject further. It is most simple, most feasible, and in perfect agreement with sense and experience to say, that the will directs the finger to move when and as it pleases, either by its own

power, or by the power and efficacy of an all-powerful Will, superior to mine. From either case it results, that there are in the universe beings, who act by knowledge and will. And these qualifications are neither proper nor belonging to a corporeal substance, as they do not form any part of the essence of matter.

This is proved by another demonstration. To be able to admit two beings to be essentially different, the ideas which they convey to us, their definitions, their attributes, and their actions must be totally at variance with, and entirely opposed to, each other. It is on this principle alone, that we can believe any one thing to differ from another. Now the soul and the body are in their attributes and actions completely different, and give us notions which are as opposite as light and darkness. By this it is clearly proved, that the nature of spirit is perfectly distinct from that of body: consequently the soul of man is not material. From whence it follows demonstratively, that the universe contains a First Principle, or First Cause, from which the soul of man is derived ; which cannot be corporeal ; which must be of a nature entirely separate from that of matter, and which acts *solely* by the power of its will.

If those, who reject the truths of religion, would not suffer themselves to be carried away, either by levity of mind, or by the pride of human reason ;

if they would permit themselves to be guided by candour, and by a sincere desire to search after truth, I would entreat their attentive perusal of this and the two preceding chapters : they would, without difficulty, then, be able to pursue my mode of reasoning, and should consider well, whether they are convinced by the arguments which have been used, or whether they have further objections to advance. After weighing them well, if they still persist in their incredulity, they must not continue to stand on this unhallowed ground, without opposing demonstration by demonstration, reasoning by reasoning, evidence by evidence, and difficulty by difficulty ; and when they have well considered the proofs, which they have to offer in opposition to those here advanced, let them candidly judge on which side reason enlists herself. I dare venture to assert, that if this examination were fairly gone into, in a spirit of sincerity, with an earnest wish to discover truth, and with all the application that a matter of such awful importance requires and deserves, every doubt would vanish, every difficulty would be solved in favour of true religion ; impiety would give place to holiness of heart and purity of life ; and infidelity would fade before the bright pages of revelation.

Thus far have we attempted to place religion on sure and certain grounds, by the establishment of these main points :—First, That there is a God,

intelligent, self-existent, spiritual, and all-powerful ; —secondly, that the soul of man is immaterial ; as such, not divisible ; it follows, not destructible, and consequently it must be *immortal*. It remains further for us, by strong and clear evidence, which we may very properly name the preliminary principles of faith, to establish those other truths which Revelation teaches.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE FOREGOING PRINCIPLES UPON RELIGION IN GENERAL.

THE infidel speaks of religion, we know, as a political invention, and as an abuse of the simplicity of the greater proportion of mankind. If we were to give credence to this assertion, we should acknowledge that the fear, which is natural to the mind of man, has been acted upon to produce a belief of a Supreme Being, and to establish his worship: but it is clear and certain, that this is as unjust, as it is absurd and ill-founded. In proof of this, we refer those who are thus unhappily prejudiced to the preceding chapters, and to the arguments there accumulated for the establishment of those two fundamental propositions,—That there is a God, and that the soul of man is *immortal*. Let us now proceed to see what effect these principles have on religion in general. Since there is a God, a supreme intelligent Being who exists by his own power, and who is also the first and chief Being, from whom all others derive their

existence and every power which they possess; since there is such a God, it becomes us to pay strict attention to the consequences which result from it.

First, It is evident, that this Greatest of all Beings, who has formed the universe, ought to be adored by all those creatures who are capable of understanding and knowing, that they have been raised into existence by his power, and supported by his goodness.

Secondly, It is not less evident, that we ought to pray to, and invoke, this Supreme Being; because, having formed the world by his power, he must necessarily uphold it by his providence. And here we will pause a moment to say, Let not any one urge the inevitable consequences of *the unalterable decrees* of the Almighty, as a reason why prayer is unnecessary or useless. I enter into this argument no further than to destroy this pretence of the infidel; and for this I say, that he must remember, that the same God, who decreed the existence of man, decreed also the worship due to himself. He, who decreed the end to be obtained, decreed the means we should use in obtaining it. Let not finite, then, argue against Infinite; let not man search into things too deep for his understanding: it is sufficient for us to know, that God hath appointed *a way*, and that he, who rejects *that way*, will find, to his eternal cost, that he has only him-

self to blame, and that he is entirely without excuse, when the gates of heaven shall be everlastingly closed against him.

God being the disposer of every event, it is clear to each reflecting mind, that man should seek him in prayer. As God is all-powerful, it is consistent, that we, his creatures, should pray for his help in all our doings, that we may obtain those things which we desire, and be delivered from such as are distressing to us, or contrary to our wishes. Reason teaches us that this is our duty : what is more than this belongs to the impenetrable secrets of the Almighty.

Thirdly, It must be believed that all men will be judged "according to their works *." This assurance is an evident and necessary consequence of the existence of God—of a Being all-perfect, as well as intelligent, and also of the nature of a reasonable and immortal soul in man.

The infidel of every age has asserted, that good and evil are only distinguished in their nature by the authority of human laws, and by the customs of different countries ; and in fact if there were no God, if indeed their hopeless and miserable creed were true, if that Being whom we worship were only a Being of imagination, instead of an omniscient God, this would be the case. Virtue

* Rev. xx. 12, 13.

and vice, good actions and criminal ones, would be all alike and equal. These are the convenient principles of the libertine : but how can we expect one pure and salutary thought from such a source ? If the fountain be polluted, so will the streams be. Yet it is possible, even with such ideas, to deceive the world. A man may be apparently virtuous, from the desire of obtaining a fair reputation : he may desist from evil, through fear of punishment ; or even, he may avoid it, from a natural disinclination thereto : but of what will the heart of such a man be formed ? what absurdities, what evasions, does not impiety invent, behind which to shelter herself ! She will argue against the clearest lights of the understanding. For if morality is capable of demonstration, our very nature feels, and the facts prove, that there is a sensible difference between assisting a distressed or disabled fellow-creature in his utmost need, and assassinating a human being in the concealment of a wood. Again, man is made for society, since he has the power of communicating his thoughts to others. This power of mutual converse cannot be intended as a snare, which nature has designedly spread, that we may be entrapped to our own destruction and that of others.—Further, as the Supreme Ruler is an intelligent Being, he delights in *order* through all his works. Thus man is to live in conformity to the light of that reason, which he has given him.

It would be useless to insist further on so evident a truth. It is only those, who deny the existence of God altogether, or those, who create a deity after their own corrupt inclinations, who can deny this, or attempt to confound good and evil, virtue and vice. For if human reason is derived from *Perfect Intelligence*, it must of necessity be in conformity with its great Original, and its objects must be fixed, real, and immutable.

The human soul we admit to be a being, it having been proved capable of action ;—a being also capable of thinking, since all the operations of the soul, which are known to us, are in affinity with thought. We have demonstrated, that the soul is not material, not a component *part* of the human body. It is not therefore subject to the destruction to which the body is liable ; and if the soul exists after the body is gone to decay, her condition must be conformed to her nature, and in proportion to her actions.

These are the first approaches which reason makes towards religion. The infidel would do well to consider them ; and see what he has to offer in opposition to arguments of such weight.

CHAPTER V.

REASON CONDUCTS US TO REVELATION.

WE have in the preceding chapter clearly established, that the idea of religion is in strict accordance with our reason, by the proofs with which it furnishes us of the existence of a Supreme Being, of perfect intelligence, and of absolute power; and also of the spiritual nature of the soul of man, together with the real and essential difference which exists between good and evil.

All these truths, so in unison with reason, must lead man to adore and invoke that God who made him, and to desire and seek for a happy immortality after this life. Experience teaches us, that the wicked are often apparently as successful in this world, as those who have chosen piety for their guide. This confusion of events, which we are at first sight ready to call unjust and derogatory to the wisdom of an all-powerful Creator, carries with it, necessarily, the supposition of a future state of happiness for those who walk in the paths of holiness, and of misery for those who live in utter disregard of the laws of their Maker. If


we examine religion by the light which reason affords us, without any assistance from revelation, we shall be led to consider it as consisting in praying to and praising God, and doing good unto all men ; in bearing with patience the evils of life, looking to the hope of a happy immortality after death. This happiness right reason tells us, is probable, from the immortal nature of the soul and the power of the Deity.

Those who have had only the light of reason to guide them, those who have never been assisted by revelation as we have been, have not arrived at the hope of a resurrection of the body : on the contrary, they have invariably spoken of it as a thing impossible. Had they formed a just estimate of infinite power, they would readily have allowed it to be *possible*, since it does not imply any contradiction ; and they might have entertained an idea of its probability also, since reason and justice might have led them to imagine, that the body which had been a partaker with the soul in its actions, would also share with it either its happiness or misery in a future state. This idea seems only consistent with the wisdom and justice of the all-intelligent Director of the universe.

When we consider the creation of the world, the Providence which guides it, the service which reason allows to be due to the Deity, the evident distinction between good and evil, the eternal

happiness or misery to which we are destined after this life, the resurrection of the body and the universal judgment, when we remember that these articles of religion could only be to a certain degree established by reason ; we are compelled to admit, that it was requisite and necessary that they should be more fully explained, sustained, and confirmed by revelation,—that is to say, by a particular declaration from God himself: that every one may learn, from clear and infallible testimony, those things which the Almighty has done, which he now does, and will do, and what he promises, threatens, and requires of us.

Those, who deny the possibility of a Divine revelation, even after they have admitted the Being of an all-powerful intelligent God, certainly must be considered as in one and the same breath contradicting themselves. When we have acknowledged the existence of a Supreme Being, the Creator of the universe, reason will not permit us to deny his power to give us a revelation of his will : on the contrary, it obliges us to acknowledge, that the omnipotent Governor of all things, by whom alone we live and have our being, must have the power of communicating to mankind, by such means as he sees fit, all that is necessary and proper for them to know. And reason still further teaches us, that revelation was necessary to give a firm foundation to religion, since the chief truths, which



it enforces, are so many declarations of what God has done and will do for men.


For example : the resurrection, the final judgment, the life to come, being the free acts of the Almighty, being entirely the result of his will ; his own declarations of such facts became necessary to teach mankind to believe them with assured confidence. Our reason alone never could have brought her calculations nearer than to establish the possibility or likelihood of such circumstances, and nothing but a revelation from God himself could bring us to a clear and satisfactory conclusion upon all these matters. We will not detain our readers to apply this mode of argument to many other articles of faith, which we learn in the Holy Scriptures ; such as the natural depravity of man, his constant proneness to sin, and other things which revelation alone can explain to us. We wish only to shew in this chapter, that the religion, which right reason establishes in the human mind, conducts it undeviatingly to revelation.

CHAPTER VI.

OF THE TRUTH OF REVELATION.—THE FIRST
PROOF OF ITS DIVINE ORIGIN.

WE must observe, in the first place, that it suffices only to prove, that the books of the Old and New Testament contain nothing but what *is strictly true*, to be fully assured of that religion which they teach.

The essence of truth consists in its possessing an entire conformity and perfect connection in all its relations with the object which it represents: but it may be at the same time quite independent of the author who circulates it. That which is in itself *true* cannot become *untrue*, let who will relate it, let who will deny it or believe it; it cannot be more or less *than true*; it is the same, it has been the same, and will remain the same. Truth is unalterable and altogether beautiful. Thus, if we admit that God has published his holy law on Mount Sinai; that Jesus Christ was crucified; that he died on the cross and was buried: these facts are clear and certain truths independent of the authors who relate them.



I am led to make this observation, to teach the infidel that we shall be prepared to meet all the cavils which he can raise. Nothing, which he can object against the inspiration of the sacred historians, will give the slightest shock to religion, if we can prove the facts which they have related to be true. Take the Bible as they will, as an inspired Volume or not; if it is certain, that the words which it contains *are true*, the religion which it teaches will be firmly fixed, the laws which the Holy Scriptures give us will be the laws of God, and the salvation which they promise to man will be salvation to all those who believe.

Another question which perhaps may be put by the caviller is, whether the authors of the Sacred Volume had choice of their words, or whether the inspiration of the Holy Spirit extended to every expression and sentence. This question appears to me altogether useless: it is enough for the reality of religion, that the authors of the Divine Book teach us nothing but what is *true*, and that every word is in strict conformity with this. Religion, to be true, must be worthy of God, as a sovereign and intelligent Being, and calculated for man as a reasonable creature, who is to be taught by it, to know, to praise, and adore his Maker; to serve him and to render him obedience; to put an entire confidence in, and to submit himself totally to, the guidance of his providence. This idea of religion

is no more than the necessary consequence of the nature of God, and that of man : and this is a principle which we may safely admit without fear of contradiction ; for even the infidel will be ready to allow, that if *religion is true*, it must be of this character. This then being granted, I ask the gainsayer who denies revelation, to shew me any book in the whole world except the Bible, which has spoken worthily of God and properly of man ; or which indeed has spoken even reasonably on these subjects ; unless the arguments in any such book were altogether derived from the Holy Scriptures themselves.

Neither do we find, that the ancient or modern disbeliever has ever been able to produce a system, which would bear a shadow of comparison with that which is contained in the Sacred Volume. All, who have attempted it, have failed in dignifying their subject. None but the inspired penmen have succeeded in describing the greatness of God and the true nature of man ; and on the subject of religion, we seek in vain throughout the writings of the most learned men, either for solid reason or sound sense, unless they have written in accordance with revelation.

How is it then to be accounted for, if not by its Divine Origin, that the Bible alone teaches us truly of God, his attributes, his greatness, and his power ; his goodness, his infinite knowledge,

and all-guiding Providence? Surely we cannot with any reason deny the Divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, when in them alone are contained all those truths of revealed religion which none but God could know.

I wish, that those who *will* still lean to infidelity, would shew me wherefore they do so, that I might convince them, even yet more fully, that the Bible speaks in a manner which in every line proves its truth, and not only its truth but its Divine origin. When they object to Holy Writ, it is proper at the same time to say, what are their ideas of a religion which should be true, and would appear to be such as might arise from, and be in conformity with, a source so sacred. But where are those among men, who would do other than betray their ignorance in the attempt? The sacred historians are the only persons, who ever have or who ever will succeed in it. They alone completely understood the excellency of God and the truths of religion. From whence, then, did they derive a knowledge so rare and so singular? Where, but from the fountain of all knowledge, God himself?

Moses, who was the first of these men, lived in an age, when nearly the whole world was wandering in the blindness of spiritual darkness. The Egyptians, though learned in many sciences, were in total ignorance of the nature of true religion. Yet we find in the writings of this Moses,

who was brought up entirely among them, and educated solely by their learned men, the most elevated ideas of God, and of that duty which we owe him. It would much exceed our limits to extract from all the Books of Moses those sublime and numerous passages, in which he describes the majesty and authority of the Supreme Being ; the Pentateuch itself will supply them innumera- bly to the careful searcher after heavenly wisdom ; we must content ourselves with selecting two examples from Deuteronomy. “ Thou shalt have none other Gods but me *.” “ The Lord our God is one Lord : and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might †.” In these few words are contained infinitely more than we can find in any other volume in the world, though pages upon pages in countless numbers might be devoted to the important subject : but these ideas are too generally understood, and too well known to detain us any longer.

Moses then we must allow to have been most eminent and distinguished, if only in comparison with other writers : but we do not find in his books one word of that philosophy which he had learnt among the Egyptians, and from them we have already shewn that he could not acquire any just ideas of religion. Must not then that knowledge,

* Deut. v. 7.

† Deut. vi. 4, 5.

which is displayed in his writings, have been more than human? Was it not a Divine knowledge? Must it not have proceeded from Perfect Intelligence itself? Was it not indeed a miracle, that a man, without having been taught himself, should be able to teach his fellow-men truly to know their God and to serve him in a manner suitable to his purity, power, and goodness? Must it not have been by the aid of Divine inspiration alone, that Moses was enabled to open to the minds of men so clear and so holy a worship; and that, in so plain a manner, that reason, however uninstructed and uncultivated, cannot refuse its assent to and admiration of it?

If those, who reject Divine revelation, would find in the first ages, or indeed in any after ages of the world, another human being, who has framed a system of worship or a code of laws in any degree equal to those of Moses, it would in some degree weaken those arguments, which are established on the singular excellence of this individual. But I fearlessly assert, that the legislator, the teacher, the leader, the historian worthy to be compared with Moses, has never yet been found among men. It has been said by some, that Moses was truly a man of ability, that he had a wonderful genius, *but that he was an impostor*. I ask those, who are bold enough to avow such impious and pernicious sentiments, to declare upon

what grounds they form their judgment; and I will engage to shew them clearly, let their reasons for the accusation be what they may, that it is impossible, with the slightest appearance of truth, to tax Moses with deceit. Of those enemies of Moses, who are compelled to allow, that he was a man of great genius, though at the same time they tax him with imposture, I ask, when did it happen, that an impostor, even supposing him to have been possessed of the most elevated talents,—when did it happen, I say, that such a man controuled and directed by his will a nation consisting of many hundred thousands, and founded them into a distinguished republic, yet not in any degree by force of arms; not by forming a party of the strongest, the wisest, and the wealthiest of the people, but simply by the holiness of that religion, and the wisdom of those laws which he promulgated among them? I deny that imposture ever carried with it such a singular prerogative.

What did those sages of ancient Greece, whose names have been handed down to us through a succession of ages, accomplish; what did they carry into effect with their abundance of knowledge? They formed numberless sects: they were opposed to each other even in the same cities: they disputed with unceasing variety; doubting on every subject, and ending at length where they began, in the wide waste of uncertainty; after all their

disputations deciding on nothing. This was the true character of heathen philosophy ; and what did they leave behind them ? A few disciples ; an inconsiderable number of followers, whose fame was of still shorter duration than their own. How is it, I ask the unbeliever, how is it, that from among these men not one is to be discovered, whose works can be brought in competition with the doctrines or laws of Moses ? This appears to be an unanswerable argument ; but the pride and obstinacy of the corrupt heart of man is such, and his natural blindness so like Egyptian darkness, that he, who affects to deny Revelation, will, in defiance of all reason, and all truth, persist in declaring Moses to have been an impostor. To this I would only reply, if such be the case, the imposture must discover itself in his doctrines, his laws, or his histories.

We have before pronounced it to be essential to true religion, that it should enjoin the worship of one only God ; that it should instruct man in the obedience which he owes to his Creator, and that it should lead him to a well-grounded hope of everlasting happiness in a future life. If then there be imposture in the writings of Moses, reason herself assists in the deceit : for she perfectly sanctions the doctrines which he teaches, and the worship which he inculcates ; and in them we find all

which has been already mentioned as consistent with true religion.

Another proof of the truth of religion consists in its perpetual duration. It commenced with the creation, and will exist to the end of time. It must do so, because it proceeds from certain and evident consequences; from those two incontestible truths, that there is a God, and that the soul of man is of a spiritual and immortal nature.

It is objected, that all nations do not practise this religion. I reply, it is true that there are many barbarous nations still in heathen darkness, but this does not destroy or shake the truth of real religion. One may as well deny the existence of learning, because a great part of the world is in ignorance. Let us not be disturbed by such absurd arguments; but let us remember our first axiom in this chapter, that what is *true* is not the less so, because unbelievers deny it. What is true cannot be more or less than true, though numbers should oppose it; and it will only remain the same, when admitted by the whole world.

Revelation was in the first ages preserved by tradition, and afterwards by writing; as, after the flood, God saw fit to shorten the lives of men, tradition alone would, in the course of a few ages, have become confused and uncertain.

Let the infidel muster his whole store of argu-

ment; I defy him to overturn one of the principles which we have laid down for true religion.—

First, That true religion, the religion of revelation, is in perfect accordance with right reason.

Secondly, That this religion is as ancient as the world.

Thirdly, That Moses is the only writer, who has taught such a religion to men.

All other religions of human invention have passed through a thousand changes, and have returned in a few ages into that nothingness from whence they sprung. Neither the Assyrians, the Egyptians, the Greeks, nor the Romans have been able to preserve a Bel, an Isis, a Ceres, or a Minerva, a Jupiter, or a Mars. They all have been levelled by the destroying hand of time. Their names, together with their boasted honours, and pompous ceremonies, are scarcely heard of, except in seats of learning; and there they find place only in the declamations of the scholar or the effusions of the poet.

But the knowledge of the true God, the God of Moses, has subsisted from the beginning of the world. The revolutions of ages, the opposition of all the powers of the earth, the fury of idolatry, the bigotry of superstition, have never been able to destroy or darken the worship of Jehovah. In all ages the God of the Bible has had his faithful followers; while the religion, which it teaches, was

constantly receiving additional light and lustre from the numerous prophecies, which were from time to time added to the sacred volume; till, above all, the promulgation of the blessed Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, brought the types, symbols, and ceremonies of Moses, with the predictions of the Prophets, from under the cloud, which had partially enveloped them, into the glorious light of perfect day.

When we can thus trace religion, the religion of revelation, retaining throughout so many ages its original purity, it becomes us to conclude, that what has been so miraculously preserved against the power of time, and from all the vicissitudes, to which the productions of men are liable, must have received its derivation as well as its durability from the all-powerful Disposer of times and events.

CHAPTER VII.

REFLECTIONS UPON MOSES, THE AUTHOR OF
THE FIRST FIVE BOOKS IN THE SACRED
VOLUME.

THOSE who oppose revelation are so unjust and unreasonable, that there is no species of deceit, which they will not employ to establish their destructive tenets: from want of evidence, they use arguments which are calculated to confuse the simple, and mislead the weak; and, rather than be reduced to an ignominious silence, they will deny facts without proof, and against probability. Moses, if we were to listen to their assertions, is not the author of those books in the Sacred Volume, which have been attributed to him by believers in all ages: those books, they say, were not written at the time they profess to be; and they add, perhaps, that such a man as Moses never even existed.

Let us examine these denials and doubts, ridiculous as they are. Let us shew these unbelievers the absurdity of their conduct. I allow, that it is perfectly just, if any one asserts a circumstance

without bringing forward a single proof to establish it, that to deny it simply should be sufficient for its refutation, until he who first related it makes it certain by evidence; but when any one advances good reasons for the truth of what he says, then it is very far from sufficient barely to deny it: indeed, it would be quite ridiculous to attempt to do so, and expect to succeed in contradicting his allegations to the satisfaction of others. It becomes necessary, then, to produce reasons strong enough to overbalance those of the relator; or at least, by argument, to shake his testimony, and make his story doubtful. Let us see what success the infidel has had in this way, with regard to the sacred penman.

We say, that there was a lawgiver of the Jews named Moses: unbelievers deny this. Let them shew wherefore they deny it; and we will discover to them, how weak and ignorant are their arguments, be they what they may: for I assert, that the proofs of the fact are of such a nature, that they cannot be contradicted; they are sufficient to convince any reasonable unprejudiced mind, that such a person as Moses did really exist, and that he was both the lawgiver and historian of the Jews. The Jews are to this day, we know, in being, but dispersed in all countries over the whole of the habitable globe, although they remain a distinct and separate people. This fact is beyond all denial;

yet I feel assured, that, if the infidel dared venture on such a glaring absurdity, he would contradict it: he would like to assert, that there never had been a nation called Jews. But I ask, can any one reasonably entertain a doubt, that this people formerly composed a separate state, a republic, having its own laws, both for its government and its religion? All histories, profane as well as sacred, agree in this. Their wars with the Romans, and the siege of Jerusalem by that nation, are such evident demonstrations of the truth, that one almost fears being thought absurd in giving proofs for the establishment of so well-authenticated a fact, as that of the existence of the Jews, collectively, as a nation: one might as well bring forward proofs of the existence of the Greeks or Romans.

Since, then, it must be admitted, that there was a separate nation called Jews, having laws and maxims of their own, these people must necessarily have had a beginning. Ask any individual Jew, or the whole people collectively, they will with one voice present us with a book, which contains their history and their laws; but, at present, we will lay aside this history, and content ourselves with an examination of their laws only. Now, it is impossible, without absurdity, to dispute their having had their peculiar laws, as well as the Athenians, the Romans, or any other na-

tion ; and consequently, their laws must have also had an author or authors.

What will the infidel answer to this ? Will he maintain, that these laws had a plurality of authors ? For argument's sake, let it be for one moment admitted : does the number of authors alter the purity, or the celestial origin of those laws ? On the contrary, according to the usual mode of reasoning, a plurality of authors would serve to strengthen their weight. It is the nature of these laws, not the number of the authors engaged in compiling them, which stamps on them their Divine origin. It would be a contradiction of reason to doubt a fact, because many witnesses shared in the recital. But we ask the sceptic, why he supposes, that these laws of the Jews were composed by many authors ? For though it does not in the slightest sense alter their nature, we see neither proof nor probability for such an assertion. We believe with the Jews, that one man, by the command of God, wrote those laws on which their religion and their government was founded ; because this fact is admitted and received by them all, and all histories concur therein : besides, it is against all probability, that so many should have assisted in this work, and that one individual should have had all the honour of it. If we only argue upon a name, it is a matter of indifference. The name of an

author has no influence on his works, as to their truth or authenticity ; and in writings of anti-quity, the author is known only by his works. Thus, since the Jews called their legislator and historian Moses, wherefore should we cavil upon a name, which is in itself so indifferent, and which has in fact nothing to do with the real question ? The Athenians had their Draco, their Solon ; the Lacedemonians, their Lycurgus ; the Romans, their Numa. Why are these names peaceably to enjoy their reputation, and that of Moses alone to be annihilated ? Is this reasonable or just ? But, far from this being the case, there never has been a name so renowned and so celebrated as that of Moses. There have been scarcely any historians, of early ages, who have not spoken of this extraordinary person ; and many fabulous circumstances are to be found in some of the ancient authors related of him, as well as some of the real wonders which he performed. Thus it is not from mere prejudice and credulity, that we are fully persuaded that Moses has been the lawgiver of the Jews, and the greatest of all lawgivers. To deny a fact so well established, is to put a supposition in opposition to a reality.

In our inquiries after truth, we naturally seek to discover at what period this legislator published his laws. This interrogation appears to me unquestionably decided, from the determination of the former one ; for since the republic of Judea

must have had a beginning, and since the laws of Moses formed that republic; its religion, its policy, the direction of its laws, and its internal government; it is evident, that the Books written by Moses were composed before the foundation of that republic, and that, consequently, they are of an earlier date than its establishment. And let us here observe, that there is a vast difference between a book cast indiscriminately among the people for their amusement, or even in some measure for their instruction, and one published, for the express purpose of giving a nation a fixed form of government, or of regulating their notions as to their morals, and their religion. The first will be soon thrown aside and abandoned, as a common and unimportant occurrence, or forgotten like the passing breeze; whereas, the other will be continually read, consulted, and referred to, and will become a record of public utility, to which the reputation and the welfare of the nation will be much indebted.

It would be truly most extraordinary, if a man of judgment and sense were to attempt so absurd a thing as to make a whole nation believe, that he had composed and published a book for the express purpose of giving them both laws and religion, unless the fact of his having done so were well known and clearly ascertained: but it would be more surprising still, if all the people


of any nation were to consent quietly to receive such a bold imposition, instead of rejecting it with contempt; and more wonderful than all this would it be, that age after age should elapse, and that no discovery of the imposture should be made. It would have been good policy in Jeroboam, when he revolted against the house of David, to have opened the eyes of the Israelites to this fraud; if a charge of this sort could have been substantiated against the Books of Moses. As this king chose priests *, who were not of the tribe of Levi, in disobedience to the Law of Moses, it would obviously have been to his interest to have done so. But neither Jeroboam nor his successors, whatever their wishes might have been, attempted to shake these laws, because all were convinced of their Divine authority. Even wicked Ahab, who sold himself “to work” iniquity “with greediness,” did not dare to possess himself of the heritage of his subjects by violence, because the law of Moses forbade it; and before he ventured to take possession of the vineyard of the persecuted Naboth, he had him stoned to death under a false accusation †.

Upon what grounds, then, can any one form an opinion, that Moses did not give these laws to the Jews; or that they were not written at the

* 1 Kings xii.

† 1 Kings xxi. 13.

time they appear to have been? Surely, upon no satisfactory evidence; not even upon probability; upon nothing better than caprice, originating in the minds of those, who will, without reason, disbelieve, doubt, and disregard Divine things, however strong the proof which supports them, however clear the demonstration which sustains them may be. Reason teaches us, that a republic formed on any given code of laws, cannot be more ancient than those laws themselves; and she informs us still further, that these laws of Moses could not have been in force; that the Jewish republic could not have been formed until after this people left Egypt, or they would in that country have made some figure as a nation, instead of being in a state of most oppressive bondage, and suffering under the cruel lash of the tyrant Pharaoh, until they were withdrawn from thence by Moses. Now, as the children of Israel were led out of Egypt by Moses, which the Jews of every age have uniformly asserted, and which profane history has fully confirmed; it must necessarily be concluded, that Moses gave them these laws during the interval of time between their leaving Egypt and their entrance into Canaan. In Egypt it is clear that they did not possess them; indeed, they would have been utterly useless, for they could not have practised them in that situation. It appears in the Book of Joshua, that the Israelites were in



possession of these laws, when they passed the river Jordan*, as is seen by some of the tribes leaving their wives and families, in obedience to Moses, on the other side, while they crossed over with their brethren to assist them in conquering the country, that all might equally divide the danger and toil, until the whole of the promised land should be vanquished†.

Thus, if we attentively examine holy writ, we shall find the history of the Jews, uniformly sending us, step by step, without any intermission, back to their first lawgiver Moses; in whose commands, both moral and ceremonial, every Jew, in every age, has acknowledged the full weight of Divine authority.

It is for the infidel to see, whether his reasons will fairly weigh against those which have here been brought forward; and whether, when he has accompanied us so far in our arguments, he can still deny, or doubt, that the laws of the Old Testament are of Divine inspiration, and that they were written by Moses at the time, in which we assert them to have been—namely, in the interval between the Egyptian bondage, and the entrance of the Israelites into Canaan.

* Joshua i. 12—16.

† Numbers xxxii. 16, &c.

CHAPTER VIII.

REFLECTIONS ON THE MORAL LAW OF MOSES.

WE only agree to what has been already proved, when we admit, first, That Moses is the author of those books contained in the Sacred Volume, which are attributed to him ; secondly, That those books are as ancient as the Jewish Republic ; and, thirdly, That the religion which they teach is, in every essential point, in perfect consistency with right reason. It now remains for us to enter more at length into the subject of these laws, and to consider them not only as separated from the historical part of the writings of Moses, but as divested of the exterior circumstances, which attended their promulgation. Of these we will speak hereafter. If we examine the laws of any other nation, we shall remark three or four things inseparable from human laws, which at once place them infinitely below the laws of Moses.

First, The people collectively, or their leaders, as their representatives, give to these laws, when formed, the weight of their authority.

Secondly, we must observe, They select for the

drawing up of these laws, one or more persons endowed with proper talents for such employment.

Thirdly, These laws are made to accord to a certain degree with the convenience of the people, for whose use, and by whose consent, they are established.—Now we find it frequently happens, that human laws require to be altered, amended, or changed : sometimes they are diminished ; sometimes they are added to ; change is inevitable to them, because those, who compose them, having only human foresight, do not discover at once the inconvenience which may at a future day arise from the enactment of some of them. Thus, what is useful and proper at one time becomes useless and improper at another. The vices of the world are almost as various as the manners of society, and as liable to change ; and new offences constantly are demanding new laws. If then, the laws of Moses have remained unaltered, if they have escaped those vicissitudes, those changes, the common lot of every thing which has its origin in the understanding of man, reason and justice require us to acknowledge, that the Jewish law-giver was greatly superior to all other legislators, and that the laws themselves derived their authority from a much higher source than the power of any human being, whether rulers or people, or both acting in concert.

Now, it is clear that Moses neither received the

power to give these laws from any individual in authority among the Jews, nor from any number of the nation collectively ; for at the time, in which he promulgated them, there was neither a republic nor any other form of government among them. It was Moses who brought regularity and order into a confused and unorganised multitude, into a people who had fled from Egypt in terror and haste, dreading momentarily lest they should fall again under the tyrannical and oppressive yoke of the Egyptian king. But, though Moses led them forth, let us remember that it was not in the character of a victorious commander, or in that of a valiant leader prepared for conquest, but as a man whom God had chosen and had employed by his especial command, and to whom he had given a power to perform miracles, which overwhelmed at length the hardened Egyptian king with terror and dismay, and obliged him to give an unwilling consent to the departure of the Israelites.

If Moses had received, either from the leaders or the people, the authority to frame these laws, the power of the people would always have been superior to them, and they could equally have authorised other persons to amend or alter them. But, on the contrary, we find, that at all times *the Law of Moses* was held sacred and inviolable, and received as the Law of God by the whole Jewish nation. Magistrates and people, kings

and leaders, all acknowledged its Divine authority and were submissive to it ; and no one ever attempted, or even expressed a wish, to make any alteration in, or to abrogate, any part of it.

Can any one seriously believe, that the whole Jewish people, stubborn and rebellious as they ever were, would thus readily have consented to such a fraud, merely for the purpose of establishing the glory of their nation, by affecting to claim to themselves the honour of having God for their Lawgiver ? A little attention to the subject will shew us that this was not probable, nor indeed even possible.

To imagine such a collusion as this between Moses and the Israelites, we must also imagine that the Jewish people would have bound their lawgiver to make no ordinances which would be a weight and burden to them, especially such as did not appear useful in themselves, according to human judgment. Now, we shall shew, in a future chapter, from the nature of many of the Mosaic laws, that this was not, and could not, have been the case ; consequently there could not have been any secret intelligence between Moses and the people of Israel.

Secondly, Every one allows, that a legislator ought to be a man of an understanding very superior to that of the generality of mankind. This is a qualification which no one attempts to deny,

that Moses possessed in a very eminent degree ; but we must admit that there must have been something more to influence the conduct of Moses than merely great natural powers of mind. If we will judge fairly, and remember the state of barbarism of the human race in general at the time he promulgated his laws, we shall allow that he accomplished what unassisted human nature could not have succeeded in.

It is well known that reason expands herself in the human breast, in proportion to the degrees in which she is cultivated and exercised ; and it is equally certain, that whatever subject occupies the mind, there must be time for its formation and arrangement before it can be brought to maturity.

Is it not remarkable then, is it not extraordinary, nay, is it not miraculous, that in the earliest ages of the world, a mere man, such as Moses, should have been able to make *at once* the wisest of laws ; laws which have stood the test of ages, and which remain to this day unaltered ; that he should have made, I say, or rather have produced them to a numerous race of fugitives, and have regulated these people into a well ordered state by the authority of these laws alone ?

Certainly, if Moses had not been the inspired minister of God, he would not have been able, whatever natural strength of genius he possessed, to have produced by his own unassisted reason

those excellent laws, which contained all their perfections from the first moment of their formation ; which provided for every circumstance ; which found a punishment for every crime, not only within the reach of probability, but of possibility also ; in which there was no necessity for change, alteration, or diminution. Never was there any other human legislator able to accomplish so stupendous a work. Nor did Moses perform it by his natural understanding, unaided by Divine assistance, we are assured.

Thirdly, We have before remarked, that the laws of mankind in general are calculated for the convenience, and adapted to the wants, of the nation for which they are intended ; and consequently, they are frequently and necessarily changing or requiring amendment and addition. But the laws of Moses were given to the people as the commands of God ; and the people with one voice received them as such, and submitted to them without alteration or dispute ; thereby at once acknowledging their Divine authority. In the midst of calamity, even when their observance of them was sure to be followed by additional persecution, we find the Jews professing an inviolable attachment to them ; which alone can be reasonably explained by their firm belief, that Moses wrote what God had taught him ; and that, in obeying

him, they were submitting themselves to the word of Jehovah.

Since then Moses, the first of all legislators, was indisputably the wisest ; since he did not act by the authority of the people, nor was he guided by any of those motives inseparable from the commission and character of lawgivers in general ; since the laws which he wrote are infinitely superior to all other laws ; since the Jews in all ages have allowed his laws to be Divine, have we not both reason and evidence to convince us, that, although Moses was a most extraordinary man, he was especially assisted by the Spirit of God in the composition of his writings ?

We have only to read the laws which were published by Moses, to be filled with admiration of them. Let us consider the Ten Commandments, which are addressed equally to the whole human race, without distinction of age, sex, or condition. What truth, what equity, what holiness, what elevation, is expressed with unexampled force and brevity throughout the whole ! Where is the moral code which can equal them ; the four first fully teaching us our duty to God ; the six last setting forth, as amply, what we owe to our fellow-creatures ?

Laws of human invention have no other design than to regulate what might otherwise disturb the peace of society : they can only prevent the out-

ward appearance of evil. The thoughts, the plans, the desires of the heart, are far beyond their controul. But the Law of Moses reaches the source of every crime: it forbids even a wish for the possessions of another. "Thou shalt not covet," commands us to abstain from unlawful desires of every kind. If it were necessary to our argument, it would be easy to shew the many plain rules of holiness, justice, and equity, which are contained in each commandment, and in as few words as those we have quoted.

The laws of Moses give protection to the widow and the fatherless; they distribute justice equally to the rich and the powerful, the poor and the weak, the slave and the stranger; and even the beasts of the field find in them protection from the cruelty of man. They prohibit not only enormous crimes, but impurities of every sort. From whence are these laws derived? I ask once more: from whence came this code so remarkable for their purity and holiness? Their antiquity is a convincing proof that they were not borrowed from other laws. What then is its source, if it be not the source of all holiness and purity, the Almighty Triune Jehovah?

Moses speaks of the actual presence of God, in the publication of the Law on Mount Sinai, in a manner which cannot be doubted. No one will suppose, that an impostor of the greatest effrontery

would dare to speak thus boldly of such a circumstance, if he were uttering an untruth.

Let the infidel attempt to give us a plan of religion more worthy of God, more suited to man, than that which is contained in the Bible. Let him find a law-giver who can equal Moses ; and if he fails in carrying these two things into effect, he will then, I trust, be ready to acknowledge, that it is only “ the fool who hath said in his heart, there is no God *.” And let those who still will daringly insult the Majesty of Heaven by disbelieving the power and existence of the Deity, tremble, lest to them “ the Lord ” should declare himself “ by the judgment which he executeth, and the wicked should be snared in the work of his own hands †.”

* Psalm xiv. 1.

† Psalm ix. 1.

CHAPTER IX.

OF THE CEREMONIES PRESCRIBED IN THE LAW
OF MOSES; THEIR NATURE IN ACCORDANCE
WITH DIVINE WISDOM.

THE enemies of religion imagine themselves able to raise another objection against the Divine institution of the Law of Moses on account of its numerous ceremonies. Of what good, say they, are such a multiplicity of precepts and ordinances about indifferent things? Is it consistent with the infinite wisdom of the Deity, to take pleasure in such distinctions of meats, and in so many ablutions? And what has the observance of rites and ceremonies to do with purity of mind?—I shall endeavour, in this chapter, to combat and remove all such frivolous objections, by shewing, that these ceremonies are, on the other hand, certain indications of the truth of the Divine origin of the whole writings of Moses. But before we proceed any further, it may be proper to give two reasons for their institution among the Jews: the one, that they served to distinguish them from all other nations in a peculiar manner, while they were me-

morials of the various blessings they had received; the other, that they assisted in protecting them against falling into the idolatrous worship of strangers, who might attempt to seduce them from the service of the true God. A third and principal reason may be added to the two first; which is, that God saw fit, by types and ceremonies, to foreshadow that great sacrifice for sin, which our Saviour Jesus Christ was to make, and the renewing and cleansing of the heart, which was to be the work of the Holy Spirit.

We cannot imagine for a moment, that, in those ages of heathenism and barbarity, the religious ceremonies of other nations were of a spiritual nature. Spiritual worship was beyond the comprehension of a worshipper of idols: a material God seemed to require a service, in its nature the same: a worship, which consisted of interior pomp and gaudy ceremonies, flattered the corruptions of human nature. People, we know, applied themselves to idolatry with eagerness and pleasure: and painful and severe as some of the heathen ceremonies were, there was no austerity which did not find its votaries; so prone has mankind ever been, to prefer some bodily service, some self-atonement sacrifice, to true devotion, the devotion of the heart and mind.

In the religion taught by Moses, we find ceremonies and sacrifices, merely considered as memo-

rials of mercies received, or foreshewings of far greater mercies to come ; and we are distinctly told, in various places of holy writ, that God abhorred them, unaccompanied by sincere piety, stedfast faith, and holiness of life : while, on the contrary, idolaters were taught, that in the exact observance of their ceremonies, their sacrifices and their ablutions, the worship of their false gods consisted, thus at once establishing the clear and decided difference between true and false religion.

Moses relates, that four hundred and thirty years before the time in which he wrote, God had promised a son to Abraham and Sarah, who had given up the hope of children ; and that from that son should proceed a posterity, which should become a numerous and great people. This promise was extraordinary, and necessarily required an especial interference of Providence, both in its commencement and completion. Not to see the power and wisdom of God in its fulfilment, is to shut one's eyes against the full light of day. Can the enemies of religion produce from any other history a circumstance parallel to this ? must not those, who behold the completion of this promise in those people who claim Abraham as their progenitor, be wilfully blind, not to acknowledge the power of God in the fulfilment of his own word. " And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth ; so that if a man

can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered *."

I am well assured, if we were to select an individual of understanding, who had never heard of the holy Scriptures, nor of an opposition to them ; and if we were to read to him these words, and then point out to him, that in the persons of the dispersed Jews, the posterity of Abraham is now in existence in countless numbers, though four thousand years have elapsed since the promise was given ; I am well assured, I say, that this man would exclaim, that so wonderful a promise, so faithfully executed, could have no other author than the Governor of the universe, and the Director of every event.

But what would this man say when he came to hear the history of the posterity of that Abraham, to whom these words were addressed, when he came to learn what their grandeur, and what their misery had been at various times ; when he should be told of their Egyptian bondage, their wonderful deliverance from it, their entrance into Canaan, their possession of that land for many centuries, their wars with various mighty nations, their quarrels among themselves, their desolation from the Assyrians, their captivity in Babylon,

* Gen. xiii. 16.

their persecutions from the Greeks, their total overthrow and comparative destruction by the Romans ; when he should be shewn the unhappy Jews fleeing from the sword of their conquerors, and becoming bond-slaves and fugitives over the face of the whole earth ; when to this should be added, that they have existed for the space of nearly two thousand years, thus scattered and dispersed, suffering every indignity, deprivation, and insult, which man can invent ; and that in every place, nation, and country, they are to be found, perfectly a distinct and separate people ? What other reply could he make to this, but to avow it to be a miracle, and to exclaim ; Behold in this wonder the almighty power of God, and the truth of his word ?

The present existence of the Jews is, to my conception, of itself a demonstrative proof of the Divine origin of the Bible. Surely nothing but a mind wilfully rejecting the light of truth, can refuse its assent to such a host of evidence in favour of revelation, as this one circumstance presents.—Perhaps the sceptic will raise yet another objection, and will attempt to say, that when Moses wrote, the Jewish people were already so numerous, that he could safely assert this promise. This objection we will also shew to be equally groundless and vain. First, the Israelites, always have acknowledged Abraham to be their

progenitor, and to this day they do so ; and as to their numbers, that identical circumstance was in the days of Moses a verification of the truth of the promise, and of the power of God. Secondly, we will reply by putting a question to these cavillers : How did Moses know that the posterity of Abraham would exist for four thousand years, and still continue to be a numerous people ? How many other nations have arisen and fallen in the lapse of that time ; how many kingdoms have been raised into power and sunk again into insignificance, whose inhabitants have become mixed and amalgamated with their conquerors in such a manner, that their origin cannot in any way be traced ! Yet the Jews, though scattered over the whole of the habitable world, are as distinct from the rest of mankind as when they dwelt in Jerusalem and in Judea.

The fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham is thus proved beyond all rational doubt. Then there is a God who gave this promise, and the laws written by Moses are the laws of that God.

Thus time, which devours nations and empires, kingdoms and states, has not been able to consume that people, which God had formed through his promise, and upheld by his power. In the unaltered course of that blood of Abraham, which has flowed for four thousand years unintermixed and distinctly known, we trace another of the

wonders of Providence; in preserving to us through the Jews the writings of Moses and the Prophets in their original shape. It was worthy the wisdom of the Almighty Creator, that the depositaries of his word, the keepers of the archives of the church, of the title-deeds of religion, if I may so call them, should be peculiarly set apart, and distinct from other men, both by nation and language; by forms and ceremonies; by a miraculous establishment and equally wonderful preservation.

It appears to have been one of the purposes of Divine Wisdom, that the Jews, who rejected the promised Messiah themselves, should possess proofs, by which the whole world besides might acknowledge Him, that all people might be convinced, that, however exact the conformity they might discover in the Old and New Testament, there could not, by any possibility, be the slightest collusion between the authors of the two.

By this continued distinction of the Jews from the rest of mankind, it is manifested clearly also, that though now they abide in the darkness of unbelief, though they nationally still reject Jesus Christ as the Messiah, yet that they are the ancient people of God, concerning whom his Prophets declare, that he will shew mercy and gather them together as a nation above all nations, when they shall acknowledge that mighty Saviour

whom their ancestors rejected and slew. If the Jews had been indiscriminately mixed and confounded with other nations, what advantage might not the unbeliever have made of the circumstance? He would have told us perhaps, that the history of this people was merely a romance, that the Gospel is a fraud from the same, or at least from no better, source. But in the simple fact of their mere existence, as a still distinct and separate people, we find sufficient to refute any attempt at such an assertion, and to close the mouth of the infidel for ever.

One reason, we say, for the establishment of some ceremonies was, that they might serve as memorials of the most remarkable events in the history of the Israelites. We have before observed, that some of the Jewish ceremonies were not only types of the blessings promised in the Messiah, but also memorials of some signal mercies received by that people themselves. Thus the passover, in every one of its particulars, has a reference to the circumstances of the Jewish release from Egyptian bondage, as well as to the deliverance of all mankind from the bondage of sin and Satan.

Perhaps there is not any part of Scripture, at which incredulity more delights to cavil than at the account of the wonders wrought by Moses, in withdrawing the children of Israel from Egypt;

but let us attend to the words of Moses himself, when he commanded the children of Israel to the continual repetition of the ceremony of the passover:—"And it shall come to pass when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? that ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses *."

Now, what appearance would Moses make as a man of understanding, if he could continually have set before the eyes of the people a ceremony, to commemorate circumstances and prodigies, which had their origin only in his own invention. If the wonders, which he relates as performed in Egypt, had indeed been only fables, he took the very way to be convicted of imposture; and had he been conscious of practising deceit, instead of having instituted the passover he would have thrown a veil of mystery over his relations calculated to confound falsehood with truth, and which would have rendered it, in the course of a few ages, extremely difficult, if not utterly impossible, to have distinguished the one from the other.

Thus we see that even the ceremonies of the Jewish religion add proofs in favour of revelation, instead of giving arguments against it, as the

* Exod. xii. 26, 27.

infidel would endeavour to assert. With regard to these, we have already said sufficient for our purpose; but in the next chapter we will add some few more reflections still further to demonstrate, that the Law of Moses did indeed proceed from God.

CHAPTER X.

REFLECTIONS, FURTHER TO SHEW THE DIVINE
ORIGIN OF THE LAW OF MOSES.

WE have before observed, that it has been the design of lawgivers of all ages, to compose and enact laws calculated to contribute to the good order, comfort, and happiness of those, for whom they legislated. The people, by whom they were invested with authority, expected this of them, and to this end all their endeavours were directed. Free and independent states can have no other object in their laws, than their own preservation and happiness; and no prudent legislator would be inclined to make his laws both inconvenient and penal, any further than it might be absolutely necessary to do so for the peace and safety of society. Yet, behold this Moses, to whom even the infidel allows great abilities, without consulting the inclinations of the Jewish people, publishing a code of laws, many of them hard and difficult to be borne, and some of them in the highest degree penal; instituting the punishment of death for many offences, and bringing on the Israelites the

hatred of the surrounding nations, by the absolute manner in which he forbid any union or connection with them.

Let us for a moment, in imagination, divest ourselves of all knowledge of the history of the Jewish people. Let us, under this supposition, open the Books of Moses, and read those ponderous, those burdensome ordinances, to which he commanded the Israelites to pay exact obedience : what would unassisted human reason exclaim ? We know from the example of the infidel, that it would be too ready to reject these laws with contempt. We should be too easily inclined to accuse the Jews of folly in submitting to so heavy a yoke. But let us beware of determining in haste. The facts of the promulgation of these laws by Moses, and the reception of them by the Israelites, when properly considered, are of themselves strong presumptive proofs in favour of their Divine origin. We find, that these harsh, these highly penal statutes were received with the profoundest reverence, by the whole Jewish nation ; that they were preserved and persevered in, not only by those to whom they were first given, but by their posterity, with singular veneration and attachment, in the most sorrowful times, as well as during the prosperity of Judea ; and though the stiff-necked Israelites were often disobedient, and continually falling into idolatry, we do not discover, that it ever


entered into the imagination of any one among them to propose an abrogation, or even the slightest alteration of the Mosaic code. As these laws were first formed, so they continued; and such they are to this day to the unhappy Israelite, who blindly refuses to participate in the freedom proclaimed by the Gospel of Christ. Must there not, then, be something very extraordinary in all this? Is it not resisting common sense, to deny that this veneration of the Jews for their laws could only have arisen from the full belief and entire conviction of their Divine origin?

Surely, no one who reflects will attempt to say, that the Jews were not themselves persuaded, that God was the author of their laws. From whence, if not from this conviction, could they have denied that inflexible rigour with which they punished the worshippers of idols? What other cause could have led them to consent to condemn to death without considering the ties of friendship, or of blood, those Jews who turned from the worship of Jehovah, and bowed the knee to false gods of wood and stone? How else could they have been led to such unrelenting severity against the idolatrous inhabitants of the land of Canaan, but from the command of Him, who had declared himself to be "a jealous God?" And what other than their full persuasion, that the word of Moses was His word, could have kept the Israelites in

continual hostility, with the Pagan nations by which they were surrounded.

I can easily comprehend, that a tyrant may compel a people to receive and obey the most unjust and the heaviest ordinances ; but I am not able to imagine, that a free and independent nation would submit themselves to the rigour of many highly penal laws, and to the weight of innumerable and even painful ceremonies, unless they were entirely convinced, that they had their origin in a power which they were bound to obey, which they acknowledge as possessed of an authority more than human,—the authority of God himself.

Let no one impiously attempt to bring, in opposition to our arguments on this subject, the mutilations of the priests of Cybele ; neither let him sneeringly enumerate the austerities of the Dervises, nor the extravagancies of the Faquirs of India. There is not the slightest comparison between persons, who voluntarily bear the weight of any penalty, or who inflict any suffering on themselves, to obtain the charitable donations, or to attract the admiration and the pity of mankind ; and that of a whole people submitting to such ceremonies as those required by the Law of Moses, without any motive, either of profit or glory : one might as fairly compare the dangerous leaps of the mountebank and the rope-dancer, with the



exertions of him, who exposes his life in some hazardous attempt for the advantage of his country, to which he is summoned by his duty.

The rigour, with which the violation of the Sabbath was punished under the Mosaic dispensation, is another proof of the Divine origin of these laws *. We read in Numbers, that Moses commanded a man to be stoned to death for gathering sticks on the Sabbath-day; and we find that the mandate was instantly obeyed. Where is the law-giver, who would by his own power have ventured at such an act as this? Where are the people, numerous and free as the Israelites were, who would have obeyed him, had it not been that both legislator and people were convinced, that it was the Almighty God who had commanded the infliction of this punishment?

Once more, let us ask what were the powerful reasons, that could have induced Moses to have acted so directly in opposition to those rules which ever have influenced, and ever will influence, the ablest and best composers of all human laws; namely, the ease and comfort, as well as the safety and good order, of the people whom they govern; their own popularity among them, and the admiration of surrounding nations? I reply, Moses sought the glory of God, not the praise of man. His pur-

* Num. xv. 32, &c.

pose was implicitly to obey the will of Jehovah, and establish among his brethren true religion, rather than to obtain for himself a vain though exalted reputation: and every political system, every object of merely human wisdom and prudence, gave way to this great end.

We have already shewn, that the very nature of the Jewish religion was an invincible obstacle to alliances with the surrounding nations: yet we do not find that a stranger was to be refused admittance into the Jewish republic, if he would abandon his former habits, and submit to the whole law, both moral and ceremonial; if he would absolutely renounce his idols, and worship the only true God. But though the heathen nations were not altogether excluded from the privileges of the Israelites, yet Moses did not, in imitation of other lawgivers, invite strangers, by offering them free naturalization: they could not enter the commonwealth of Israel, except under the yoke of those heavy ordinances, to which the people themselves were subjected. I state this in proof of that which many other circumstances might, if it were necessary, still more forcibly establish; namely, that human policy had nothing to do with either their formation or enactment, and to shew that the rites and ceremonies thereby enjoined must have proceeded solely from the fiat of Him who tells us by the mouth of his holy Prophet, "For

my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts*.” We shall finish this chapter by stating a few of those, which appear to us, convincing reasons in further support of the Divine origin of the writings of Moses, drawn from another part of the subject, which we have hitherto only slightly touched on; namely, the miracles which Moses relates as having been by his instrumentality performed in Egypt. Was he persuaded of the presence and authority of the God of whom he spoke, and to whose power he attributed those wonders? or did he know them to be nothing more than a tissue of imposture, and his account of them a string of falsehoods? Did Moses know that he asserted circumstances for which he had no foundation? or was he himself altogether convinced of the truth of these miracles? If Moses was certain of their reality; if the relator of these things indeed believed them all, then the truth of religion, the Divine origin of the Bible, admits of no reply. If, on the contrary, Moses knew that the wonders performed in Egypt were fables of his own invention, then was he the weakest of all created beings to imagine for a moment, that he should be able to succeed in obtaining credence for so marvellous a tale.

* Isaj. lv. 8, 9.

A certain number of persons may agree in any given falsehood; but would a whole nation, would a million of people solemnly sanction a string of untruths, and hand them down to their posterity, setting their seal upon them, by receiving and obeying the laws of so gross an impostor? These prodigies, we must remember, were done before the whole assembled people: had they not been actually performed, as Moses relates, he must have been instantly convicted of falsehood by thousands of witnesses. The result then proves the reality of these miracles; and the works themselves are a sufficient evidence of the Divine authority which produced them. To what a degree of absurdity must the infidel be reduced, if he can bring himself really to believe, that a whole nation would have joined in such a daring fraud? for to this point it must at last come. And for what purpose will he assert that they did so; that they not only consented to become partakers of the imposture, but imposed upon themselves all the burdensome and grievous ceremonies of the Mosaic Law? Will he assert that they did so for the purpose of obtaining honour to their posterity? Be it so: but what honour could they hope for either to themselves or their children, by the relations of their murmurings, their impieties, their idolatries, and the miracles wrought in the wilderness for their chastisement? To these statements the Israelites *have as readily consented as to the former.*

If we even suppose, that this people might, one and all, have united to invent and propagate untruth for their own glory, surely it cannot be imagined that they would as willingly have supported falsehood to cover themselves with shame. How easily, too, could the Egyptians have convicted them of imposture! How readily could they have silenced their vain-glorious assertions, if they had not been delivered by a mighty hand, and by an outstretched arm! If, indeed, the sea had not opened to offer them a path, and closed its waves again to overwhelm Pharoah and all his host with destruction, how soon must they have been refuted, and loaded with disgrace!

There remains then, to the enemies of revelation, but one last entrenchment, which is comprised in the assertion, that all the Books of Moses were written a long time after the period, when the events which are recorded in them are stated to have taken place; and that consequently Moses could easily have invented what circumstances he pleased, and have given them the shape of a real history. This assertion has already been clearly refuted, in the contradiction of others; but in the next chapter we will adduce the most convincing arguments in proof of the falsehood and impossibility of such an idea.

CHAPTER XI.

PROOFS, THAT MOSES IN ALL HIS WRITINGS,
EXCEPT THE BOOK OF GENESIS, RELATED
ONLY EVENTS TO WHICH HE WAS AN EYE-
WITNESS.

To be fully satisfied of the truth of any history, it is necessary to consider, whether the circumstances, which attend it, are such as they ought to be.

First, An author should relate that which he himself has seen, has performed, or has compelled others to perform. Or secondly, He should be perfectly acquainted with his subject, and well instructed on all, concerning which he writes. Thirdly, He should have a multitude of witnesses, to the facts which he records ; and it is desirable that his witnesses should not have been idle spectators, but participators in the acts, the difficulties, and the successes which he relates. Fourthly, And above all the other three, the historian himself should be a man of probity and good understanding ; a man of a clear head and an upright mind. When all these qualifications are united in an historian, who can possibly doubt his rela-

tions, however surprising they may appear? The bitterest enemies of revelation must readily allow, that an historian of this description is worthy of implicit credit. If any one can be unjust and obstinate enough to deny this, his reason, however perverted and prejudiced it may be, will, if he will only for a moment listen to its free suggestions, put to flight every doubt or cavil, which his corrupt heart is inclined to retain; and let him not be tempted to silence that reason, and reply by weak sophistry or callous impiety. We do not here speak only for argument's sake; we know that we bring forward proofs which cannot be resisted; and we would impress on our readers the solemnity and the importance of our subject. Religion is not an affair merely for the casuist; but it is a matter of the deepest moment for the conscience, the heart, and the soul.

When we examine the history written by Moses, by the above rules, we may discover in it, with very little attention, all the characters of truth which they contain; consequently it does not leave the slightest room for the most incredulous obstinacy to reply.

Moses was not only an eye-witness to what he related, but he took a very principal part in it, and he had a perfect knowledge of all the circumstances which he recorded. To add to this, there was an innumerable host of witnesses to all the

principal facts of his history, consisting of a *whole nation*, who not only saw, but who participated in many of the most trying circumstances, and who also shared in the triumph of his successful ones : and, above all, Moses was a man of probity and understanding,—a man of a clear head and an upright mind.

If then this history was committed to writing at the time which we assert ; that is, during the life-time of Moses, after the children of Israel quitted Egypt, and before their entrance into Canaan ; the infidel can have no other retreat than the weakest infatuation. Impiety will be reduced to entrench itself behind a simple negative, destitute of every defence in the shape either of proof or probability. Are we then, on the bare word of the infidel, to risk our eternal destiny ? Are we to trust the dearest interest of our souls to the keeping of those, who will doubt, deny, and argue in the face of the clearest conviction ?

We have, in a former chapter, most distinctly shewn, that it is not possible reasonably to doubt, that Moses was the law-giver of the Jews, and that he published his laws at the time in which he professes to do so. We have also admitted that the Jews in all ages acknowledged this fact. We have proved, that it was those laws which gave force both to their religion and their government ; and we have as clearly shewn,

that they are necessarily as ancient as that government. This is demonstrative as a matter of history, and we are at a loss to find what reply the unbeliever can make to such clear and convincing arguments. We have however yet further proofs to establish the sincerity of the history, with regard to the time when it was written. One commonly judges of the state of any history by its perfect agreement in all its circumstances with those periods of which it speaks ; by no relation being anticipated, no custom being out of place ; for it would not be possible for any false historian to be so continually on his guard, as to let nothing betray him either in his style, or in describing the customs of the age, in which he professes to write. The critic has, in fact, no other method than this, by which to examine any history. We must remember, that we are at present only speaking of the last four Books of Moses, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy : we will in a future chapter take into consideration the Book of Genesis.

Now, we rest upon this foundation, *That Moses did truly and indeed write those Books, which are attributed to him, and the whole which they contain, during the forty years in which the Israelites wandered in the desert.* Thus all, which is related in these Books, as happening in the presence of the people of Israel, did in reality so take place, or

the whole nation must have been willing accomplices in the imposture : but we have before sufficiently dwelt on this as regarded the miracles done in Egypt. We will see, whether any other part of the history carries on the face of it the slightest appearance of fraud.

First, Moses this great historian, this wise lawgiver, this mighty leader, dies in the desert within view of the promised land. Hence we have a proof at once, that the Books, which he wrote, must have been composed before the Israelites passed the river Jordan. Now if a writer of a fable or romance had imagined these events, and had chosen to give the Jewish nation the glory of such a hero as Moses to boast of; surely he would have finished his relation by conducting the children of Israel into the promised land, with so highly talented a leader and lawgiver at their head. But truth teaches us, that Moses die without entering Canaan, in consequence of having committed some offence against the Almighty, on the nature of which, commentators have differed. After so many fatigues, such innumerable difficulties and dangers, the fact alone could have produced the recital of so fatal a termination to the career of this great legislator; this favoured servant of the Most High.

Let us pursue this reasoning yet further. Joshua the conqueror of Canaan, we are taught by

holy writ, succeeded Moses as the leader of the children of Israel. I would ask the infidel,—Is Joshua too a creature of imagination ; and is his Book also an imposture ? Will the unbeliever allow, that this portion of sacred history is true ; or is this to be considered as supposititious likewise ? and is the whole history of the children of Israel to be reduced to nothing more than the tale of an enchanted people, who had their existence in no place, except in the imagination of some inventive author, willing to amuse the world at the expense of his own integrity, and of their understandings ?

If we allow it as an historical fact, that Joshua effectually established the Israelites in Canaan ; that he divided the country to them in tribes, and meted to every one his proper portion ; we must as readily conclude the truth of the writings of Moses. And, surely, we can no more deny Joshua's having conquered Canaan, and his having divided it among the Jews, than we can the victories of the Romans, their regulations respecting those countries which they had subdued, or any other given fact of profane history.

Joshua fully, and solemnly, acknowledged the writings of Moses, by building “ an altar at Mount Ebal *,” and copying thereon the law, according to

* Joshua viii. 30—32.

the commands which were given to the people in Deuteronomy*. We also find Joshua making the same acknowledgment of their truth and authenticity, by his allotting to the daughters of Zelophehad an inheritance with the brethren of their father†, which Moses commanded, or to speak more precisely, which he mentions, as commanded by the Almighty, in the Book of Numbers‡.

It is from these and many other passages certain, that in the days of Joshua, the Books of Moses were well known, and that his laws were considered as inviolable ; for by them this great commander regulated his own conduct, and that of the people.

Thus the whole thread of sacred history contains within itself evident and repeated proofs of its authenticity.

Again ; what good could any historian have formed to himself in giving such a precise detail of the intended construction of the Tabernacle§, if it was already in being ; if, as the infidel asserts, the history had not been written till long after this, and many other circumstances, there spoken of, had actually taken place ? And what could have been the use of so many ordinances, to guide the children of Israel in their journey through the

* Deut. xxvii.

† Joshua xvii. 4.

‡ Num. xxvii.

§ Exod. xxv.

wilderness ; and those particulars, as to the way in which they were to convey the ark, and to erect and remove the tabernacle*, if these things had their derivation only in the imagination of the author ? —Any one would surely have been more concise, had he not seen the absolute necessity of these commands at the time in which he wrote. Wherefore, too, should he have enumerated the people, and the weight of their offerings, with so much precision and exactness, if these things had been long passed, instead of actually taking place at the moment ? An impostor, supposing him to have been the most ingenious and inventive of human beings, never could have had calculation enough to have entered into such various details, for no other purpose than that of deception ; details, too, which so completely carry on the face of them the appearance of a register of events, as they actually occurred, rather than of a recital of the things of former ages, or the mere inventions of the imagination. Above all, what could have induced any author to relate, that all the people above the age of twenty, except Joshua and Caleb, should die in the wilderness without entering the land of Canaan†, if such had not been the fact ? The force of truth alone could have produced so tragical a recital.

* Numb. i. ii. † Num. xiv. 28, &c. ; xxxii. 11.

From whence did it happen, that Moses spoke only in general terms of a place*, in which God would choose his name to dwell, when the Israelites should be in possession of Canaan? It would have been very easy for an impostor, composing a history in aftertimes, to have said something more distinctly about Jerusalem. Why did not Moses then do this? The plain reply must be, Because Moses wrote in the desert long before any such city was in being, and had not the command of the Almighty, nor was he inspired by the Holy Ghost to be more explicit.

In the instructions of Moses, respecting the conduct of the future kings of these people†, we find many particulars very much at variance with the acts of several of the kings of Israel and Judah in after ages. Why did not these princes, if there was even the slightest suspicion of imposture, as to the writings of Moses, get rid of a law so opposed to their practice?

They were absolute masters of the archives which contained them, and of the authentic monuments of their Divine source; such as the rod of Aaron, the manna with which the people had been fed in the wilderness: these were all within their reach. Would they not have destroyed them, together with their laws, and have made

* Deut. xii. 5.

† Deut. xvii. 14, &c.

ordinances more to their own liking, had they not been fully convinced of their Divine origin ?

It is not without sorrow, that we are constrained by the oppositions of infidelity, to demonstrate things in themselves so clear ; for at last we come to this :—when the Books of Moses first appeared among the children of Israel, were they already in the observance of the statutes and ordinances, which they contain, or were they strangers to them ? One of these two things must have been the case ; either they practised them before Moses wrote, or they did not. No one can assert, with the slightest shadow of reason, that they were already in the observance of them ; and we find no circumstance, which can with any probability lead us to suppose that they were even acquainted with either their nature or purport. If they were neither in the observance of them, nor had any knowledge of them, what could have given to the unknown volume of an impostor the weight of an unalterable law ?

It is clear, then, by the most satisfactory demonstration, that Moses related nothing in these Books, but what the people of Israel were partakers of, and eye-witnesses to ; and that, consequently, the laws enjoined by him are the commands of God ; and that both the history and laws were written by Moses at the very time, at which it is asserted they were.

CHAPTER XII.

ON THE BOOK OF GENESIS.

MOSES could not have chosen a more appropriate preface, nor one more worthy of his subject, and of the dignity of the Divine Author of the whole, than an abridged history of the creation of the world, such as he gives us in the Book of Genesis.

We have already considered this circumstance, according to the rules of right reason ; and we have found, that among all the different systems, which the imagination of man has invented, there is not one which more clearly releases us from all difficulty, nor one which is more within the reach of probability, than that which acknowledges an infinite and all-wise Power, acting by will alone in the production of the universe, without being guided, or acted upon by any other cause.

But Moses conducts us to a much more intimate knowledge of the subject : he teaches us the exact period of the Creation ; and we learn also, in the Book of Genesis, the number of ages,

which elapsed between the time of that event and the establishment of the Jews in Egypt.

The most daring infidel will not be able to accuse Moses of imposture, in this book ; for he has confined himself to so short a space of time from the beginning of the world to the death of Jacob, that it is only to be accounted for by its accordance with the truth. The very nature of the facts also, as recited in the Book of Genesis, establish them as circumstances which actually did take place. What possible honour could Moses hope to derive from his account of the universal Deluge ? Where was the advantage of relating a tale so incredible ? Again ; what purpose was to be gained by asserting that the whole human race had spoken the same language for the first nine or ten ages ; and that then for a daring act of rebellion towards the Almighty, they were punished by a confusion of tongues ? One must suppose any impostor devoid of common sense, thus unnecessarily to invent such extraordinary relations, which could not have been of the slightest assistance to the historian, and which would have rendered detection the easiest thing possible. To this we may add, that an author of any ingenuity would have calculated better, than to have confined himself to the comparatively short space of two thousand years in a tale of fiction, which he wished to be received as true.

He would with care have avoided a circumstance which must have led to his certain exposure; and would have chosen rather to descend into the dark chambers of endless antiquity, there to veil his wonders in the gloom of many thousands, not only of years, but of ages far gone by. Had Moses been incorrect, how easily could the Egyptians or the Chaldeans have confuted him! Yet we find nothing of the kind attempted. The earliest histories of empires; the most received accounts of the commencement of nations; and the progressive invention of various arts and sciences; all accord with the relation given by Moses, as to the age of the world; thus convincing us beyond a doubt, that no other book carries with it such powerful proofs as the Bible does of its authenticity.

We will now consider another argument, which is grossly perverted by the enemies of religion. That we may not be tempted to follow their example, let us give it our most serious attention.

Moses, in the fifth chapter of Genesis, recites to us a catalogue of the generations of those men, who lived in the first eight or nine ages; and we find by it, that their lives extended far beyond the usual period of man's existence at the present day. To this account, the unbeliever raises a host of objections, which might all be summed up in a simple denial of the fact. "Of what use was it?

Why, if it was so, do not men live as long now ?” asks the child of impiety. Now, I shall maintain not only, that this is a truth established beyond all contradiction ; but that it is a most important truth. It is not difficult to believe, that, at the time Moses wrote, all persons would naturally have been anxious to expose the falsehood, had it not been received as a well-known fact, that the lives of the first Patriarchs had been so extended. Besides, if it had been untrue, Moses might easily have rendered it difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain the exact state of this, as well as of many other particulars, by having confused and bewildered them in the labyrinth of ages ? Will any one attempt to reply, that Moses knew that there could not be much risk in making this statement ; because the flood had effaced all these things from the memory of man. At all events, this very answer is an acknowledgment of one wonderful truth, which is related by Moses ; namely, the awful circumstance of the universal Deluge. Still further, I observe, that the idea is in itself a deception, and must be completely defeated by the recollection, that Noah is stated to have been in existence six hundred years before this dreadful visitation of the Almighty ; that we are also told, of his children being married before they entered the ark, and of his eldest son having been at that time full a

hundred years old. To add to this, Noah lived three hundred and fifty years after the waters had left the earth, and was at the time of his death aged nine hundred and fifty years.

Now, as Noah was alive so long after the flood, he could, and of course would, have instructed his descendants not only of the wonders of that event, but concerning those others, which preceded it. Such a stupendous and awful circumstance, as this, was in every way calculated to rivet the attention: we are assured by our own feelings, that the mere relation of it must have had considerable influence on the mind; and it would naturally have fixed itself on the memory of those, who received the account from Noah and his sons, in a manner, which neither time nor succeeding events could in any degree weaken or efface.

It is also to be remembered, that during the first part of the life of Noah, his grandfather Methuselah was in existence. Now Methuselah was born many years before the death of Adam; and consequently was a contemporary with the immediate descendants of our first parents, who would all have been well acquainted with the Fall, and those circumstances relating to the wonders of the creation, of which it had pleased God to inform mankind.

Let not the reader for a moment imagine, that I *only suppose* the truth of these relations, as given

by Moses. I not only suppose them, but verily believe them ; and do not doubt, that I shall be able satisfactorily to demonstrate them.

Shem, the son of Noah, was alive more than five hundred years after the Déluge ; during all which time he had abundant opportunity fully to instruct his posterity of the truth of all those facts which the infidel of this day denies. Eber, the great grandson of Shem, also lived nearly nine hundred years *. Thus we see, that the time when Moses wrote, was, comparatively speaking, so near to the period in which the descendants of the three sons of Noah lived, that the circumstances of the Deluge, and the events preceding it, being all facts recorded by a perfect and unbroken tradition, they could not possibly be obscured or doubted ; and it follows, consequently, that Moses did not impose on the Israelites as to any of the wonderful recitals contained in the Book of Genesis.

It would have required a long succession of generations to have transformed such singular and notable truths unto mere fables ; or to have caused them to be nearly forgotten, even while the means for their preservation were no other than tradition. Noah, his sons, and their immediate descendants, were effectual witnesses of those wonderful acts of the Almighty, which were afterwards recorded in

* Gen. xi.

Genesis : they were most excellent guarantees for the whole history, till Moses was commissioned by God to commit it to writing ; and we cannot but acknowledge, that these things are strong and indisputable proofs for the truth of revelation, however incredulity may choose to assail them. Moses teaches us the origin of man, as another historian would tell us of the commencement of any given people. We do not doubt the origin of any nation, of which we find an account in a well-authenticated record. Moses gives us a well-authenticated history of man from the creation, as handed down by a regular chain of witnesses of indisputable veracity. Why should we disbelieve it? Most certainly we cannot produce a shadow of evidence to disprove it.

Moses speaks of the whole world as historians speak of any given country. Who but the Creator of it all could have instructed him for so extensive a work ?

I know of but one objection more, to which the infidel can have recourse. He will say, perhaps, that the writings of Moses were unknown to strangers ; that the children of Israel alone were acquainted with them. To this I reply ; If this were the fact, it is sufficient for the establishment of their Divine truth, that the writings of Moses were in possession of the Israelites, and acknowledged by them to be the oracles of God.

Another convincing proof of the truth of Genesis is to be discovered in the promise, which it contains *, made by the Almighty to Abraham, that his posterity should be as numerous as the sand on the sea shore.

We have already shewn the truth and Divine authority of the Scriptures in the accomplishment of this promise. Then the promise itself is the strongest of all demonstrations in favour of the Book of Genesis.

To this we might add another equally, or, if possible, more conclusive argument, drawn from the promise of God, contained in the third chapter of Genesis, That the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head: which promise, as every Christian feels and knows, has been forcibly and beautifully verified in the triumph of our Lord over the bondage of sin, the grave, and the power of Satan. It is rather anticipating our subject; but I cannot forbear saying, that this glorious fulfilment of the consolatory and gracious words spoken by the Almighty to our first parents immediately after the Fall, sets a seal on the truth of Scripture, which no earthly power, which no powers of darkness, can divest it of.

The last argument, which we shall produce in favour of the Book of Genesis, is drawn from the

* Gen. xxii. 17, and xxxii. 12.

predictions of Jacob, respecting his twelve sons. In blessing the sons of Joseph*, he preferred Ephraim to Manasseh, though Manasseh was the eldest. The subsequent history of the Jews verifies this prophetic benediction; inasmuch as the tribe of Ephraim was always superior, both in number and power, to that of Manasseh.

In Jacob's request, that his body should be buried in Canaan †, we have, in fact, another prediction of the entrance of the Israelites into that land; or rather we have a proof of the entire faith of that holy Patriarch in the promises of God.

In blessing his three eldest sons ‡, Jacob does not bestow on either of them that promise of a blessing to all nations, which had been given by God to Abraham; but he confers it on Judah, his fourth son. I would ask now, if this was like the conduct of an impostor? If Moses was only inventing these things, why did he thus degrade the three eldest sons of Jacob, and not only his sons, but the tribes which descended from them? Would this prediction have been received by the Jewish nation as an event, which was undoubtedly to happen? would it have been quietly borne by the tribes themselves? could any thing have established it but a firm faith in the immutable authority of that Divine power, by whose inspi-

* Gen. xlix.

† Gen. xlix. 29.

‡ Gen. xlix.

ration the pen of Moses was guided? We do not find that this special promise to Judah occasioned either rebellion or discontent: on the contrary, the tribe descended from him, as well as the rest of their brethren, quietly awaited its accomplishment. And we see them take precedence of the other tribes, only by the order in which they entered the promised land, according to the direction of Moses; and until the establishment of David on the throne of Israel, the fulfilment of it does not appear to have been in any way conspicuous.

I ask the infidel to tell me at what time he places the publication of the Book of Genesis, together with these prophetic blessings by Jacob. He must allow one of three things: either that it was, as stated by Moses, long before the reign of David; or if, as he says, it was the work of an impostor, in the intermediate space between that time and David's coming to the throne, or during his reign, or after his death.

To say, that the Book of Genesis was composed after the death of Moses, or that this prediction appeared only just before or during the reign of Saul, would be equally absurd; for this king would never have permitted the circulation of a prediction, which so completely shut out his own family from the succession, had it not carried with it the force of Divine inspiration, together with the

weight of the clearest evidence as to the time of its publication.

If we suppose its utterance during David's occupation of the throne, or subsequently to it; in either case, the fraud would have been easily detected and absolutely useless.

But put the prophecy in its right place, according to the account given by Moses in the Book of Genesis : let us listen to it as proceeding from the lips of the venerable Patriarch Jacob, and all is beautiful and in order, carrying on the face of it the stamp of Divine truth.

If, in this case, we turn our eyes on the descendants of Jacob occupying the throne of Judah in the posterity of David, we behold his " father's children bowing down " before him *. And we see the prediction in a measure fulfilled, while in the birth of the Messiah we view its complete accomplishment.

This is not the place to examine the prophecy as regards Him, to whom " the gathering of the people " was to be †. I only speak of it, as far as is necessary for the perfect establishment of the authenticity of the Book of Genesis.

We have now to consider those proofs of its Divine origin, which the Book of Genesis contains within itself, conjointly with the other books of

* Gen. xlix. 8.

† Gen. xlix. 10.

the sacred volume. It is beyond dispute, that the precise age of the world could never have been discovered by human science : this fact could not have been produced by any calculation of man : necessarily the knowledge of it must have proceeded at once from the Omnipotent Author of creation. Who saw the completion of the world, and all things therein, but He who formed the whole, and then pronounced it good ? What other eye than that of their Maker beheld our first parents in innocence, and then witnessed their unhappy fall ? Who, but He, in whose hands are all events, knew that Noah and his family were the only human beings preserved from the flood ? Who, but He, who commands the organs of speech, beheld the daring plans of the sons of men in a moment overturned by a confusion of tongues ? Whence then did Moses obtain these wonderful facts, if not from revelation ; or from a clear and certain tradition, which must equally have had its origin in revelation ? Thus, on which ever side infidelity turns itself, it will be met by the most powerful demonstration, that the Bible is the word of God ; that it is Divine in its origin, as well as in its subject.

We have, in a former chapter, satisfactorily established the authenticity of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. If we allow these recitals to be actually the inspired word of God, we cannot for a moment assert, that Moses was

left to his memory alone, in the compilation of so important a book as Genesis. God speaks in it so often to men; to Abraham in particular, and also to the other Patriarchs;—there are such remarkable recitals as to Jacob and his children; such *essential words* in the predictions of that Patriarch;—that it does not appear possible, that tradition alone could have continued for so many successive ages the safe repository of those interesting particulars with which the Book of Genesis abounds. From this reflection we draw a further proof, that Moses must have been especially inspired for the correct recital of the important fact of the creation, and those subsequent events, which are there recorded.

The predictions, which regarded the Messiah, are so wonderful, and the harmony and consistency, which discover themselves in them are so beautiful, that they most emphatically declare the Book of Genesis to be no other than the production of Him, by whom the laws which Moses wrote were framed, by whom the wonders which he related were performed, and from whom no secrets are hidden. In a word, the very subject and style of the Book of Genesis proclaim its Divine authority, and determine its predictions to be the real, the everlasting, the immutable decrees of Jehovah.

CHAPTER XIII.

ANOTHER ARGUMENT FOR THE TRUTH OF
HOLY WRIT, FOUNDED UPON THOSE MONU-
MENTS, OR MEMORIALS IN THE WRITINGS
OF MOSES, WHICH PROVE THE MOST CONSI-
DERABLE FACTS.

THERE is such a multiplicity of abundant proof for the confirmation of the truth of the sacred volume, that it is necessary to reduce them into something like classes, to disengage them from the confusion, which so many different arguments would naturally produce, if indiscriminately mixed together. We have for this purpose divided them into several heads, trusting by those means that the reader will be more easily enabled to meditate on their general effect.

After having considered the religion and laws of Moses, each by themselves, as well as the proofs which sustain them, we have shewn the reader, that the Books of Moses were actually written at the time they purport to be;—and that Moses was not only divinely inspired as to all he wrote, but that he was the sole author of those books, which

are attributed to him, under the names of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

We are now to examine another kind of evidence, which will always have considerable weight in the establishment of any history ; namely, the monuments, which it contains, of particular events, and the ceremonies, which have been instituted as perpetual memorials of remarkable circumstances. Among any people, if such monuments are received by the public voice, if such ceremonies are complied with and practised by all, it is admitted, that those events, which they profess to commemorate, must have actually taken place ; more especially if they contain two very essential properties : the one, that they fix the time of the occurrences which they record ; and the other, that they are acknowledged by the people generally, as memorials of those events : they are then, we cannot deny, to be considered as clear demonstrations of the truth of any history.

Now the monuments, which the Books of Moses refer to and describe, are of the same date with the events themselves, and have been acknowledged as having had undoubted existence, by the Israelites in all ages, in such a manner that it places their reality beyond every suspicion of fraud. It will be sufficient for our present purpose to bring a few of the most remarkable to the recollection of the reader.

I will not assert positively, that the ark, in which Noah and his family were saved, was in being for any length of time, after the awful calamity of the flood had subsided, as Moses does not mention it; but it is highly probable that such was the case.

I shall not argue on the altars, which were erected either by Noah or by Abraham; nor upon the wells of antiquity, which bore the names of those Patriarchs by whom they were formed; nor upon the name of Jehovah-Jireh*, given by Abraham to the place at which he prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac, in obedience to the command of God: but all these circumstances have very considerable weight.

The tower of Babel was, we know, in existence when Moses wrote; for he speaks of it in the present tense, and as then actually in being, in that passage, where he gives an account of the confusion of languages†, “Therefore is the name of it called Babel.” Such an ancient and stupendous proof as this tower, of the wicked presumption of the descendants of Noah, was surely a monument of a most convincing kind of all the facts connected with it, and indeed of the whole history in which it is recorded. Moses relates to us, four hundred and fifty years after the event, the

* Gen. xxii. 14.

† Gen. xi. 9.

terrible judgment of God on Sodom and Gomorrah*. The cinders and arid nature of the country, where these dreadful punishments were inflicted, as well as the miraculous effects of God's anger on the wife of Lot, became indisputable memorials of the awful fact.

The burying place of Abraham and Sarah, in the field which he purchased of the Canaanites†, became an enduring monument of the truth of God's promise respecting the future possession of that land. This tomb, in which the bodies of the other Patriarchs were laid, demonstrates also to every pious mind, not only that these men were far other than ideal heroes of the imagination, either of Moses or any other writer; but it teaches us their absolute reliance on the word of Jehovah, by their anxiety to receive, although in the dust, the investiture of that heritage which belonged to their posterity.

The burying place of Rachel was well known at the time of Moses, and for ages after ‡, and was another lasting monument of the truth of his narrations.

Another considerable memorial which the Book of Genesis contains, is to be found in the institution of the rite of circumcision §. Moses teaches

* Gen. xix.

† Gen. xxiii. xxv. l.

‡ Gen. xxxv. 20.

§ Gen. xvii.

us, that this ceremony was commanded by God himself to Abraham ; and it has been followed, we know, by all those of his descendants, who to the present day have continued under the bondage of the Law, while they blindly reject the freedom of the Gospel.

The wonderful recital of Jacob's wrestling with the Angel, is confirmed in a peculiar manner* ; first, by the imposition of the name of Israel upon him at the time ; and, secondly, by the memory of the fact having been perpetuated to us most remarkably, by his descendants refusing to this day to eat of that part of any animal which answers to the sinew contracted in the thigh of Jacob by the touch of the Angel.

In this chapter we have confined ourselves to some of the most considerable monuments or memorials of the truth of holy writ, which are discoverable in the Book of Genesis. We will, in the next, follow up the subject, by bringing forward some instances of the same kind from the other writings of Moses. And the further we advance in the examination of holy writ, the more clearly we shall see, and the more powerfully we shall be convinced, that each fact speaks for itself, in loudly declaring the Divine authenticity of the whole Bible.

* Gen. xxxii.

CHAPTER XIV.

A CONTINUATION OF SIMILAR PROOFS, DRAWN FROM SOME OF THE MEMORIALS AND MONUMENTS CONTAINED IN THE OTHER BOOKS OF MOSES.

SACRED history informs us, that during the Egyptian bondage the Israelites were employed in building two towns or treasure-cities for the king of that country, Pythom and Raamses *. These towns then were lasting memorials of the sojourn of the Jewish nation in Egypt; and of the slavery to which they had been reduced.

If we pay proper attention to the subject, we cannot but allow to that short but emphatic expression in Exodus, so full of Divine majesty, "I AM THAT I AM †," a weight, which carries with it the conviction, that God alone must have pronounced it. It is most accurately translated, expressly according to the original; and gives a Divine authority to the writings of Moses, which is beyond all contradiction. These few words

* Exod. i.

† Exod. iii. 14.

place his work far above the compositions of any other historian, and are a most powerful monument for the truth of the whole. For where is the impostor, whose imagination could have produced; where is the impostor, who would have dared to attempt, the production of such a description of Omnipotence, at once so powerful, so concise, and so consistent with the grandeur, the dignity, and the authority of God?

The passover we have before spoken of among the ceremonies of the Jewish religion. In this place it must be considered again, as being a perpetual memorial of the truth of the Jewish flight from Egypt, and of the signal mercies of God, in *passing over* the houses of the Israelites, when the destroying angel carried desolation and death into the dwellings of the Egyptians*. To this day, a powerful demonstration of the truth of revelation is permitted to the Gentile world, by the very circumstance of the hardness of heart and unbelief of the descendants of these Israelites, who still refuse to accept of the only true paschal Lamb; Jesus, "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world†;" while they continue to commemorate their salvation from Egyptian slavery, in their sacrifice of a lamb without spot,—not seeing in that ceremony a type, no

* Exod. xii.

† John i. 29.

longer necessary, of an enduring salvation beyond the grave, procured by the death of the blessed Messiah. We could make a very long chapter of this, if we were to particularize and enlarge on all the memorials or monuments, which these Books of Moses contain; but it is sufficient for our purpose, to give a few examples, which carry with them the force of Divine truth, leaving the reader to select others for himself. We might speak of the manna, which was laid up by the express command of God, to shew to after-generations the miraculous food, which had been prepared for the Israelites in the wilderness *; we might dwell on many other wonders; but we will at once proceed to the consideration of the ark of the covenant, that august monument wherein Moses placed the two tables of stone, upon which God had written the Law with his own finger †.

The people of Israel were always taught to consider this, as an illustrious symbol of God's perpetual presence in the midst of them: it was the centre of holiness within the tabernacle. Surely with such innumerable proofs in its favour, it is only weakness of intellect, or the confusion of a mind overwhelmed with the wilful darkness of its own corruptions, which can lead any one to assert, that the religion of the Jews is founded on a visionary tale.

* Exod. xvi. 32.

† Exod. xxv. 10, &c.

The history of the ark of the covenant, without any other circumstance, is sufficient for the confirmation of the whole relation, as given by Moses ; indeed we may venture to say, for the whole of revelation. Behold it prepared in the wilderness ; see it conveyed with the greatest care before the people ; view the waters of the river Jordan receding at its approach, and giving a dry passage to the Israelites, while the priests who bore the precious burden stood in its course *,—in remembrance of which miraculous event, twelve stones, the same in number as the tribes of Israel, were placed on the other side, as Joshua expressly says, “ for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever,” that the waters of Jordan were so cut off for the ark of the covenant †. It was kept in the tabernacle, where all the Jews assembled for their solemn feasts. Once, as a punishment to the Israelites, we find that it was permitted to fall into the hands of the Philistines ‡. But the possession of it was too awful in its consequences for them to retain it long : they gladly returned it with presents ; and its restoration was attended with the miraculous circumstance of the cattle, which were yoked to it, *finding their own way* to Judea §.

* Josh. iii. 15—17.

† 1 Sam. iv.

† Josh. iv. 2, &c.

§ 1 Sam. vi.

Finally: This mighty monument of Divine truth, was placed in the magnificent temple of Solomon; and there we have every fair reason to suppose it remained, until, for the sins of the nation, God permitted the entire destruction of that temple by the Chaldeans, when it pleased the Almighty to withdraw the visible presence of his glory from among this rebellious people, leaving the ark of his covenant to share the fate of the superb edifice which surrounded it.

Whatever the enemies of religion may choose to believe of this monument, history proves that they cannot cast a shadow of doubt upon it. They may with as much show of reason assert, that there never was a temple built by Solomon, as that the account of the ark of the covenant is a fiction. Indeed the temple itself is equally a memorial of the truth of holy writ.

The history of Cora, Dathan, and Abiram*, who, with all their company, were swallowed up by an earthquake, sent for their punishment, and the account of those men, who perished by fire, are wonderful and awful relations; and God ordained lasting monuments of their presumption and punishment, by commanding that their brazen censers should be made as plates to cover the altar. It cannot be doubted, but that these terrible circumstances

* Numb. xvi.

were constantly kept in memory by the conversion of their censors to so public a purpose ; and Moses expressly tells us, that God commanded that these plates should be put on the altar, to be a sign “ to the children of Israel.” This circumstance furnishes us with an invincible argument for the truth of the whole, comprised in one single question : If this punishment had not actually taken place, would the survivors of these tribes have suffered their race to be thus branded, and their memories so disgraced ?

Another very considerable monument is to be found in the serpent of brass*, which Moses erected by the command of the Almighty ; the looking upon which was to heal those, who were afflicted with the bite of fiery serpents. Moses relates the circumstance without any remark. Eight hundred years after this period, we find king Hezekiah destroying this very serpent, because the Jews had made an idol of it, and had offered incense to it†. This fact, simply as it is stated in the Second Book of Kings, proves with certainty the existence of this monument ; and, consequently, the truth of the history itself.

Here I cannot forbear pausing a moment, to remark on the beautiful consistency, which discovers itself in every page of Revelation ; for,

* Numb. xxi.

† 2 Kings xviii. 4.

behold, in this erection of the serpent of brass, upon which all the wounded Israelites were to look and be healed, a type of the lifting up, or crucifixion, of our blessed Lord, by whom was to be the healing of all nations. To this type, he himself alluded in those words to his disciples : "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me*."

Thus we shall find, if we examine it with attention, that the religion of Moses, in all its ceremonies and institutions, puts us constantly in mind, that they were no more than shadows of better things to come, of those realities contained in the Gospel of Christ.

Let us for a moment put ourselves in the place of Moses. If we had written an account of any given people, and had felt and known that our relations were no other than fables, and romances, we surely should not have wished, that they might be examined time after time : we should have been afraid of that fiery ordeal, which truth alone can stand : but, on the contrary, we find Moses continually exhorting the Jewish people to study, to examine, and to teach his writings to their children. Whenever he gave them a new command from God, he reminded them of the wonders in Egypt to excite them to obedience and love.

*. John xii. 32.

“ I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt*,” we know to be the preface to the Decalogue. When Moses ordained the sanctification of the Sabbath, they were told it was also a memorial of their release from Egypt. When the tribe of Levi were set apart for the service of the tabernacle, it was because the angel of the Lord, in slaying the first-born of Egypt, had spared the Israelites. When Moses instituted the passover, it was that they might teach their children, saying, “ *This is done* because of that *which* the Lord did unto me, when I came out of Egypt†.” Thus Moses exposed himself openly to the eyes of all the world, in his relations, his laws, and his ceremonies ; and if they had been impostures every Israelite must have partaken of the fraud, and could not have escaped the detection and consequent contempt of the rest of mankind.

The more we reflect on this history, the more we consider every circumstance belonging to it, the more we discover it to be impossible that there is any deception in it; the more certain we feel that it is true, and not only simply true, but that it carries with it, in every line, the weight of Divine truth.

* Exod. xx.

† Exod. xiii. 8.

In our next chapter we shall proceed to the consideration of the memorials, or monuments, with which the further history of the Jews furnishes us ; for we are resolved to leave the opposer of Revelation not a single argument to rest upon : though I feel, I confess, that the truth of the five Books of Moses having been satisfactorily established, the point is completely gained, as far as the Old Testament is concerned. For, if one part of the history is proved to be real, and that the most ancient, and the most remarkable, who shall gainsay the rest of that volume, which has been so many ages, and still is received, by the whole Jewish nation, as the inspired word of God ?



CHAPTER XV.

SEQUEL TO THE ARGUMENT CONTAINED IN
THE PRECEDING CHAPTER.

ALTHOUGH, as we have assured our readers before, we wish as much as possible to avoid extending this volume to a great length ; we think it necessary, for the reasons given in the last chapter, to make a few observations on those monuments or memorials, with which the other historical parts of the Old Testament abound. The Book of Joshua, which first calls our attention, ought rather perhaps to have been joined to, and considered with, the Books of Moses, since in it are contained the relations of the conquest of Canaan, and consequently the accomplishment of the promises of God respecting that land.

Joshua gives us such innumerable proofs, that the Law of Moses was not only written, but promulgated before the people passed the river Jordan ; that in reading this book with attention, it is impossible to do other than feel this truth deeply impressed on the mind. And thus we find it with every part of Scripture, from the beginning

of Genesis to the conclusion of Revelation ; each portion adding weight, durability, and brightness to the other, and the whole resting on Christ, the "chief corner-stone." To him all the types and prophecies were directly pointed, and from him proceed the WISDOM, LIGHT, and GLORY, which teach us that in the sacred volume we have ETERNAL LIFE. Without Christ, the Bible would be NOTHING ; with him, it is ALL IN ALL.

If the Bible were the work of an impostor, it appears to me, that the art of the inventor of such a composition would have led him to relate, that the Laws of Moses were not given to the people until after their entrance into Canaan. Then if he had chosen to tell us of some wonderful acts of the Almighty in favour of the Israelites on leaving Egypt, and while they sojourned in the desert ; he would have been better guarded against detection, by speaking lightly of them as events long gone by, which it would be sufficient to relate superficially : besides, the introduction to the Law would have appeared more complete, if to those words, "I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage *," had been added, 'and who has given thee possession of the land of Canaan.' Now, the clear and certain reason, why we do not find this

* Exodus xx. 2.

addition to the account of Moses is, because he wrote *the truth*, and *the truth alone*. And as the Law was written in the wilderness before the children of Israel entered Canaan, facts would not suffer him to relate, as passed, that which had not taken place.

Let us briefly run over the account of the entrance of the children of Israel into Canaan, as recorded by Joshua. The river Jordan separates its waters, to give the people a passage through its channel*. Joshua directs the people to bring stones from the bed of the river, and to erect monuments of the wondrous fact in Gilgal†. We cannot reasonably doubt this relation as to these monuments. Why were they placed there, if not to commemorate this event, that the knowledge of it might be handed down to posterity? Why did Joshua also place stones in the bed of the river Jordan, to mark the spots where rested the feet of the priests, who bore the ark, while the people passed over, unless it were for the same reason? Then, if we admit the fact of these monuments having been so placed, we acknowledge the miracle of the separation of the waters, and we declare the Divine truth of the whole narration. The name of Gilgal‡, which Joshua gave to the place, where all the

* Joshua iii.

† Joshua iv.

‡ Joshua v. 9.

people were circumcised, when they had passed the river Jordan, is a monument of the fact, and a proof, that the Law of Moses, which commanded that ceremony, had been published before that period. It having fallen into disuse in the wilderness, the people were here, according to the Law of Moses, required, by this ceremony, to acknowledge the covenant, which had been entered into by Jehovah with Abraham their progenitor. The town of Jericho furnishes us with, if that be possible, still more convincing arguments of the truth of holy writ. The taking of it was effected in a manner which was truly miraculous*. The ruins of this city, which were to be seen for many ages, not only confirmed the truth of the history left us by Joshua, but established the authenticity of his curse and prediction respecting that city. "And Joshua adjured them at that time, saying, Cursed be the man before the Lord that riseth up and buildeth this city of Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his first born, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates thereof†." We find that in the days of Ahab, both that curse and prophecy were exactly fulfilled, for "in his days did Hiel, the Beth-elite, build Jericho. He laid the foundation thereof in Abiram, his first

* Josh. vi.

† Josh. vi. 26.

born; and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the Lord which he spake by Joshua, the son of Nun *." In this prediction, and its accomplishment nearly 550 years afterwards, we have one of the many proofs of the strength and perfection of that chain, which binds the whole of Scripture together: we have in it a ray of heavenly brightness, which pierces through the thickest clouds of error and unbelief, and displays to the world that the pages of the Bible are Divine.

The preservation of Rahab, the harlot †, was an everlasting memorial of the truth of this history: and in the uniting her family with the people of Israel, we behold a singular and wonderful act of the providence of God, teaching thereby the Gentile world, that salvation was not impossible for them; that it was not confined to the Jews; though that nation was at first especially set apart as the people of the Lord. Which circumstance is still more strongly impressed on the mind, by the reflection that the Messiah condescended in his human nature to partake of the blood of desolated Canaan, through this woman, from whom as one of his female ancestors, King David was lineally descended.

The awful punishment of Achan ‡, who was

* 1 Kings xvi. 34.

† Josh. vi. 2.

‡ Josh. vii.

stoned to death by the people for having concealed some of the forbidden spoils of Jericho, affords us another strong proof of the truth of holy writ. Since we may easily believe, that the tribe of Judah, to which Achan belonged, would not have consented to his death, if it had not been indisputably established and acknowledged, that he had disobeyed the law of the Lord, in appropriating to himself the treasure of the idolatrous city, and that the same God, whose command he had violated, had ordained the punishment. There is a certain memorial of this fact to be discovered in the circumstance of the place of his death being named from that time the Valley of Achor, or TROUBLE, in allusion to the name of Achan *.

After Joshua had raised a heap of stones over the body of the Kings of Ai, the history relates, that he built an altar upon Mount Ebal, and that he wrote upon stone the Table of the Law, together with certain maledictions which were to be read to the whole people, and to each of which they were to pronounce Amen, as *Moses had commanded* †. In this we have yet another proof, and a proof which will not admit of a single cavil, that

* "And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us?" Joshua vii. 25.—Joshua, by the Hebrew word Achar, which signifies "to trouble," alludes to the name of Achan; from henceforward they called him Achar, the troubler of Israel.

Bp. Patrick.

† Deut. xxvii. and Joshua viii.

the Books of Moses were published before the writings of Joshua were composed.

The Gibeonites, who became tributary to the Israelites, or rather became their slaves *, “ hewers of wood and drawers of water,” for the house of the Lord, were for ages living monuments of the truth of the Book of Joshua ; for their descendants were alive and well-known in the days of the Royal Psalmist.

Hebron, and its territory, which Joshua gave to Caleb †, was an incontestible witness of the truth of the history ; as was also a town possessed by Joshua himself in the mountains of Ephraim.

This subject would produce an endless variety of proofs in confirmation of holy writ, if we were to search the Scriptures throughout ; and even Joshua would supply us with many more. We might speak of the stones raised over the bodies of the conquered kings of the country. We might enumerate the enormous stone erected by Joshua, as a memorial of the people’s solemn renewal of their covenant with Almighty God ‡ : the bones of Joseph which were buried in Shechem ; and indeed others without end, equally powerful and convincing. These circumstances serve not only to prove the truth of the Book of Joshua, but

* Josh. ix. 21—27.

† Josh. xiv. 13, 14.

‡ Josh. xxiv. 26.

they establish the writings of Moses in such a manner that infidelity must veil itself in confusion, while it tremblingly acknowledges, that the Bible is the revealed word of God. We may emphatically say of the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham, in the possession of Canaan by his posterity, that it was engraven on stone throughout the whole land, by the finger of God himself.

Thus we might in a similar manner follow up the subject by the examination of all the books of the Old Testament; and they would each supply us with numberless proofs of their authenticity: but this would be doing what we are most desirous to avoid; it would be swelling this work to a much more extended size than that of a small volume, which will be within the compass of any one's perusal, who will only now and then devote a few leisure moments to promote his dearest interests; namely, the interests of his eternal soul. Before, however, we leave the subject entirely, we will mention two or three more of these historical monuments, as contained in other parts of the holy volume. In the Book of Judges we find the account of an altar left by Gideon to posterity*, and of an ephod made from the spoils of those Mi-

* Judges vi. 25, &c.

dianites, whose seductive arts were so fatal to the children of Israel*.

In the First Book of Samuel also, a very considerable memorial is to be discovered in the presents made by the Philistines to the Israelites, at the restoration of the ark †; and another, in the stone which was set up by Samuel at Mizpah, in memory of the miraculous victories obtained by the Israelites over the Philistines ‡. The history here conducts us to the reign of King David, from whence we will not push the subject of monuments any further than to remark on that *one*, the most powerful of all memorials, that strongest of all monuments for the truth of the Bible; that continual memorial, that living monument, the Jewish nation, scattered throughout all countries, yet separate from every nation, and with one voice claiming Moses to be their lawgiver, and their laws themselves to be Divine.

I do not suppose that among the enemies of religion, call them by what name we will, whether Atheist, Deist, or Freethinker, we shall find any bold enough to deny the existence of such a king as David, whose sepulchre was well known in the days of the Apostles §. St. Peter speaks of this as a matter not of doubt, but clearly under-

* Judges viii. 27. † 1 Sam. vi ‡ 1 Sam. vii. 12. § Acts ii. 29.

stood ; as a circumstance of which no one could be ignorant, as an indisputable fact which every body knew. And we need not be surprised at this ; for, be it remembered, that all monuments of this kind were held inviolable by the people of antiquity. Now, we have in the Bible the entire history of King David, with many beautiful Psalms of his composing. His writings, and the history of his eventful life, which we find in Samuel, are all powerful proofs of the truth of revelation : they all confirm the Law as given by Moses, and the various recitals which are contained in his writings and those of Joshua.

Proofs drawn from monuments, or memorials publicly established and well supported, we have before said, are to be considered as convincing arguments in favour of the truth of profane history. The name of a town has been sufficient to prove its founder. As this is allowed to be the case, would it not be the height of injustice to deny to sacred history the sufficiency of those proofs, which we admit in support of other writers. Sacred history, we have seen, has an infinity of monuments which cannot be denied ; and so closely are they allied to each other, that they are only to be compared to a multiplicity of stones in the same building, or various links in the same chain. For instance, it is only necessary to admit the existence


of the Temple of Solomon, to draw from it inferences and conclusions which carry themselves back to the promulgation of the Law of Moses.

Thus the truth of holy writ extends itself on all sides by thousands of proofs; some of the most powerful of which remain for the next chapter, in which we shall demonstrate by the prophecies which it contains, that the Bible is indeed the **WORD OF OUR GOD, THE GOD OF PERFECT KNOWLEDGE.**

CHAPTER XVI.

PROOFS OF THE DIVINE TRUTH OF THE BIBLE,
DRAWN FROM THE PREDICTIONS WHICH ARE
CONTAINED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

THE truth of sacred history may be demonstrated in a manner which admits of no reply, by the infinite number of predictions, which are contained in its various books. If we examine this part of Scripture with attention, we shall perceive that the chief of the prophecies, which have been fulfilled, were regularly more or less obscure in their expressions, according to whether the time of their accomplishment was far distant or comparatively near. When, by the power of the Holy Spirit, a remarkable event was foretold, which was not to happen for many ages, we find that it was predicted in general terms, and in very few words : and as the time of its fulfilment approached, we discover, that the Prophets spoke much more particularly and distinctly, adding many circumstances to their first predictions. In those regarding the Messiah it is exactly so.



The promise to our first parents *, respecting the triumph of the Seed of the woman over the serpent, was general in its expressions, though clear in its application to the Messiah ; but in those days, although by it was understood that *this Seed* should deliver man from the power of death, and their great spiritual enemy, no one for ages knew, how this deliverance was to be accomplished, or who the Deliverer was to be. All that could be gathered from the prediction was, that he was to be born of a woman.

Some ages after, the Holy Spirit further taught mankind, that in the posterity of Abraham, all nations of the earth should be blessed. And thus we are led on from Abraham to Isaac, from Isaac to Jacob, and from Jacob to Judah, from whom it was distinctly foretold that the promised Messiah should proceed. All these predictions are contained in the Book of Genesis ; and we are by them taught, that it was God's design that from these first Patriarchs the Saviour of the world should in his human nature descend.

When the Israelites desired to have an earthly king, God commanded that Saul should be anointed, and placed on the throne ; but he, having been disobedient to the Most High, was punished by the exclusion of his family ; and David, of the

* Gen. iii. 15.

† Gen. xviii. 18.

tribe of Judah, was appointed to succeed him, with the promise that his reign should be everlasting; that his kingdom should be without end*.

Thus we see those predictions, which were made to our first parents, to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, and to Judah, all centering in the family of David. It only remained, after this, for the Prophets to disclose the person of the Messiah, which we find them continually and fearlessly doing, even after the separation of the Ten Tribes, both in the kingdom of Israel and in that of Judah. These predictions must have been calculated to irritate the people of the kingdom of Israel against their brethren of Judah, as well as against the Prophets themselves; but no dread of the consequences, no fear of man withheld them from fulfilling their sacred duty. Surely when we remember what human nature is; when we feel and acknowledge how weak and uncertain are our best resolutions, we shall be compelled to admit, that had not these men been influenced in an extraordinary manner by the Spirit of God, they never would have had the fortitude to have proceeded as they did. If the predictions which they uttered had been the mere chimera of their own minds, they would not have been so insensible to danger, they would not have conducted themselves so di-

* 2 Sam. vii. 12, &c.

rectly like madmen, as to have claimed the honour of a Divine commission, and called themselves the prophets of the most high God, not only by their pretended foreshewing of events braving the anger of the kings of Israel, but impiously calling down the vengeance of Heaven on themselves and their followers, and dying, as under the supposition of their being impostors we must allow that many of them would have done, with a blasphemous lie on their lips ; thereby irrevocably placing themselves in the bottomless pit of perdition.

At those periods when the history informs us, that true religion was greatly obscured by the wickedness of the kings of Israel ; when we learn that even the throne of Judah appeared shaken to its very foundation, during the reign of the impious king Ahaz, we are taught that the Prophets, in defiance of every opposition, renewed with increased earnestness, and redoubled vigour, not only their denunciations and exhortations, but also the promise of the Messiah. Indeed, their predictions became then much more explicit on that subject, and were accompanied with the announcement of many fresh circumstances. Thus, Isaiah says, “ Behold a virgin shall conceive, and shall bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel *.” And again the same Prophet gives us a very full de-

* Isai. vii. 14.

scription of Him, in whom all the nations of the earth was to be blessed : “ For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder ; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this *.”

When the time of the captivity drew nearer, the Prophets of those days spoke even yet more clearly of a new covenant, and of the celestial and eternal reign of Messiah, the Son of David. Surely those, who will attentively examine the pages of revelation, will admit, that it is impossible to do other than to acknowledge the Spirit of God uttering with the voice of truth these momentous predictions, thus particularly descriptive of events and circumstances, which at the time appeared so unlikely, so completely in opposition to every human probability.

The Bible also contains innumerable prophecies concerning the revolutions of the Gentile nations, which at first sight appear obscure and difficult to

* Isai. ix. 6, 7.

comprehend ; yet many circumstances which are related in profane history, have tended not only to explain but to confirm them. And as some of these predictions have been clearly and entirely fulfilled, all doubt as to the others has vanished from the minds of serious and reasonable people. When the restoration of the Jews shall be accomplished, every difficulty will disperse, and the whole truth will be displayed in perfect brightness. We have shewn, with regard to the predictions respecting the Messiah, that it is the very nature of true prophecy to unfold itself by degrees ; none of the prophetic writings are to be fully understood by finite human nature, till their complete fulfilment has divested them of that veil, with which it has pleased Almighty wisdom to overshadow the brilliancy of Divine truth. Some prophecies being yet unfulfilled, do not in any degree weaken the authenticity of the whole Bible. Some being not altogether understood, do not destroy that force of Divine truth with which its pages abound ; but the clear, the full, the entire accomplishment of *one prediction*, is sufficient to establish, by the most powerful demonstration, the authority of every line which it contains. If we once admit that the Spirit of prophecy dictated any part of the sacred volume ; if we for a moment allow one of its predictions to have been uttered by the voice of truth, whatever we may afterwards say, however we may

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predictions which declare his spiritual reign ; the rejection and dispersion of the Jews, together with the calling of the Gentiles, and those yet unfulfilled prophecies, which relate to the full and entire restoration of the Jewish nation, to that time when they shall look with joy on Him, whom they once reviled, and no longer shall exclaim, " Ichabod, Ichabod ! the glory is departed," while they weep around the walls of Jerusalem ; but, on the contrary, shall sing with the angels, the song of rejoicing, saying, " Unto us is born in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord *." Ah ! glorious, ah ! happy day ! this is indeed a day, for the coming of which all true Christians should pray ! Who can in the recesses of his own immortal soul feel the value, the vitality of Christianity, and then refuse a prayer for the weeping sons of Israel ? Who can rejoice in that salvation which Jesus has prepared for his people, and forget that " salvation is *of* the Jews †," and who will not glory in the knowledge that salvation is also *for them*, in that time which God in his wisdom has seen fit to determine.

With regard to the Prophecies belonging to the first class, those concerning the Jews exclusively; the first is that one which we have considered in a former chapter, which was contained in the pro-

* Luke ii. 11.

† John iv. 22.

mise made to Abraham by Almighty God, that his posterity should be multiplied “as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore *.” In following the Jewish history, we have witnessed the complete fulfilment of this ; and we have also acknowledged with amazement, the miracle which is contained in the multitudinous existence of that people to this very day.

The more one dwells on this subject, the more surprising it appears that a people should remain so distinct, and so numerous, under such a state of oppression and dispersion, for nearly eighteen centuries, having repeatedly endured the most cruel persecutions, and the heaviest exactions ; their goods often having been confiscated, their persons insulted, outraged, and imprisoned ; a cruel and violent death by fire, or by the hands of the executioner, not unfrequently completing their sufferings ; while their superstitious and bigotted judges blindly imagined that they were doing God service in thus sacrificing thousands of his creatures, madly, ignorantly, and blasphemously, supposing that they were pleasing that Jesus, whose prayer for his murderers was, “Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do †.”

Let those, who wish to be eye-witnesses to a

* Gen. xxii. 17.

† Luke xxiii. 34.

miracle, behold the scattered sons of Abraham subdued but not destroyed.

Let those, who desire to see the accomplishment of a prophecy, seek it in the existence of that people to whom the Lord said, by the mouth of his Prophet Amos, " I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve ; yet shall not the least grain of it fall to the ground *."

If the existence and separation of the Jewish nation is merely according to the ordinary course of events, if it is neither a miracle, nor the fulfilment of a prophecy, how is it that we no longer with any certainty can trace the posterity of those great and numerous nations which existed in the first ages of the world ? How is it that the Jews are the only people since the creation whose origin has stood the test of ages ? Was the place of their abode some island, some insular spot, separated from all other countries, and unknown to the other nations of the earth ? Is this what has preserved them from the common fate of mankind ? Is it thus that they have escaped the general amalgamation of the human race ? No ! far from dwelling in a retired and unknown spot ! they were situated, we know, between the kings of Asia and Egypt ; between the Romans and the

* Amos ix. 9.

Parthians ; and they were continually embroiled in wars with the surrounding nations. And, finally, we must again remind the reader, that on the destruction of their kingdom by the Romans, they fled in terror and dismay into every country of the world. Will infidelity assert, that pride, or some notion of the antiquity of their race, and of the greatness of their origin, occasioned this ; that it was such ideas as these, which produced this enduring perseverance, in spite of all opposition.

How is it, I ask, that pride has never before or since, effected any thing of the kind among other nations ? How is it, that the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Assyrians, have abandoned their pride ? If we examine profane and sacred history carefully and candidly, we shall be compelled to acknowledge, that we must look for this mighty difference *only* in their religion ; in the superiority which the worship of Jehovah, the power of His protection, and the knowledge of His promises gave the Jews over all other nations. And we must still further seek in this religion, the explanation of the reason for this wonderful separation, as well as preservation. The Prophets will tell us, if we do so, that it is, that the Lord may make His promise manifest to the world that all flesh may know that in mercy He still remembers His once favoured people ; for Isaiah says, “ Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no

man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations *."

Now, if the religion of the Jews had not had truth for its foundation, why should it have lasted so many ages ; why should it, as well as the Jewish people themselves, have been preserved from the ravages of time ? What should have occasioned its escape from the confusion and oblivion, to which all religions of human invention have fallen a prey ? Where are the idols of the Philistines ? Where is the religion of the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Medes, or the Persians ? Where are the deities of Greece and of Rome ? How is it, that of all these, only a few fables remain to us of the gods of the two latter, together with here and there some ruins of the superb temples and edifices, which they erected in honour of their deities ; while the knowledge of the former has almost entirely perished with the nations who worshipped them. The religion of the Jews we have proved to be more ancient than all these. God having entered into his covenant with Abraham nearly two thousand years before the coming of that Messiah, by whom all nations of the earth were to be blessed, still this religion subsists to the Christian, as the foundation of that Gospel, by which he hopes to be eternally saved. To the Jew, who rejects that

* Isai. lx. 15.

Gospel, it remains the same code of unalterable laws, and innumerable ceremonies, as when it was given by Moses, nearly fifteen hundred years before the Gentile world were called to share in that liberty which Christ has offered equally to all. That liberty, which not only consists in a release from the observance of ceremonies, and the distinctions of meats, but which presents to the believer a glorious freedom from the bondage of his natural corruptions, and complete triumph over the powers of sin and Satan, through Him, who in rending asunder the chains of death, and bursting open the portals of the grave, "hath brought life and immortality to light *."

But let us take this argument up in another shape. In the Jewish people one beholds a republic, which has produced a complete history of its rise and formation into a kingdom, its religion, its laws, a catalogue of its kings, a list of its High-Priests, beginning with Aaron. How is it then, that we find no history of this kind left by the Assyrians or Babylonians? How is it, that the Medes and Persians have only given us a few imperfect fragments respecting their laws? Shall we answer, that they *all had these* accounts, that they kept every remarkable memorial, but their histories ARE LOST? I ask, why was not the his-

* 2 Tim. i, 10.

tory of the Jews, which was more ancient by far, *lost also?*

If the unbeliever asks for a proof of the wonderful, the all-guiding Providence of God, I know of no circumstance, which will more clearly display it to him than the preservation of that Bible, which was given to the Jews so many ages ago, and which, to the Christian, still continues to be the word of truth ; the revealed will of God to man ; the unalterable and indestructible work of the Divine Spirit. The protection of the Jews has been one great mean, which it has pleased Eternal Wisdom to use in the preservation of the sacred volume. In their distinction as a nation, in their separation as a scattered people, we find the most demonstrative proofs of its authenticity : in their successes, as well as when in desolation and sorrow, they invariably have turned to that Book as the Law of God. They have listened to its pages, as to the voice of Jehovah, when in bitterness of spirit they have mourned the consequence of their disobedience to its commands ; and they have sought in its prophecies for comfort, to lighten their chains when they have been in bondage.

But to return to our immediate subject—We find in the xxviii th, xxix th, and xxx th chapters of Deuteronomy such full and clear predictions of what is to happen to the Jews in future ages, such

promises of blessings, when they should fear God, and faithfully observe his covenant; such threatenings of extreme misery and direful misfortune, when they should be disobedient. That after having read this part of holy writ, if we make ourselves ever so slightly acquainted with the leading circumstances of the subsequent history of the Jews, we cannot but acknowledge, that Moses was a Prophet as well as a Lawgiver. In the xxviiith chapter it is particularly threatened, that they shall endure a hard captivity, *together with their king*. “The Lord shall bring thee and thy king which thou shalt set over thee, unto a nation which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, and there shalt thou serve other gods, wood and stone *.”

Now, this prophecy is peculiarly remarkable, and worthy of the deepest attention, since that part of their history which was written by the Prophet Samuel informs us, that the Jews did not ask a king till above three hundred years after the death of Moses. Will the infidel say, that these were *general predictions*, and consequently that Moses hazarded nothing in making them; that so many vague and undetermined expressions about much good and evil, the revolutions of many ages would necessarily confirm, by the events and

* Deut. xxviii. 36.

changes to which any nation would in the mutability of human affairs be liable.

I answer, first, that they were not so vague and so general as they would assert them to be ; for this people were not yet in possession of the land of Canaan ; they had no established dwelling ; they were still wanderers in the wilderness. This is therefore a proof, that the conquest of Canaan was believed to be an event, which would certainly take place, both by Moses and the Israelites.

It is not necessary here to return to the proofs, which we have already given, that the Books of Moses were actually written by him at the time they profess to be. In our present argument, this is to be considered as an established fact.


Now, secondly, I say, if these predictions were mere matter of imagination, it is most wonderful, that Moses should have been led to speak of a king of the Jewish nation, when nothing could have been more improbable than that these people who were the chosen of the Lord, these people, to whom Jehovah had Himself condescended to be King, should ever ungratefully dare to ask an earthly king ; that they, who had been under the especial guidance of the Most High, should be impiously desirous of being governed by flesh and blood ; by a poor worm, frail and mortal like themselves.

Thirdly, What could have led Moses to speak-

so unhesitatingly and positively of a captivity for the nation, and not only for the nation, but for their king likewise ; and not merely to predict this captivity, but a return from it also, and a re-establishment of their temple and their religion ? Was this prophecy too the effect of imagination ? And did only blind chance direct its entire fulfilment ?

In spite of all the arguments and the opposition of infidelity, when every assertion has been made which the most daring impiety can invent, there remains to the believer this sure and certain mode of reasoning : Were the Jewish people convinced by experience of the truth of these predictions, or were they not ? If the Jews have been experimentally convinced, it necessarily follows, that the predictions of Moses are true and divine. If they have not been convinced by what has happened to themselves, but on the contrary have known and felt the falsehood of these prophecies, from experience, wherefore would they, by following and supporting what in that case could only be fraud and imposture, draw on themselves the odium of inventing a tale of misfortunes in accordance with these vain predictions : for we come to this alternative ; either the Jewish history is a fable, and the predictions of Moses impostures,—or it is entirely true, and Moses spoke his prophecies by the authority of God.

If the Jewish nation had been subjected to their



enemies, and reduced to great misery when they were obedient to God, when piety flourished in the state, then the foundation of their religion would have been undermined, and the whole of their laws laid in ruins. But far from this having been the case, sacred history constantly represents the Israelites to us as miserable and unfortunate, when rebellious against God ; and happy and successful, when they were faithful and obedient to his commands. In this we discover the true explanation of their attachment and constancy to these laws ; we see in it that they were by their own experience entirely convinced, that their laws were Divine, that their religion was from God.

We cannot here fully enter into those prophecies which relate to the captivity of the Jews, and their return, together with the rebuilding of their temple. So many authors have written on this subject, that no one can be entirely ignorant of them : if we were to enumerate them in this place, we should encroach too much on our present plan ; and it is not at all necessary to the establishment of truth that we should do so.

We will therefore for a time leave the *matter*, and consider the *manner*, of these predictions : by this, I mean the way in which they were uttered. With what boldness and energy were they delivered when the Prophets were in the midst of their enemies ! No dangers appalled them, no fears of

death silenced them : what they had to declare from the Lord, whom they served; they boldly pronounced, in spite of threats and menaces, torture and imprisonment. In the midst of Israel they prophesied the downfall of that kingdom, while the everlasting duration of Judea made also the theme of their discourses ; and to the wicked kings who occupied the throne of David, they as fearlessly declared God's anger for their impiety, while they foretold the miseries of the Babylonish captivity.

Those of the Prophets, who intimated the place to which the Jews were to be carried into captivity, precisely described the land of Babylon ; and their predictions were pronounced even at a time when that country itself was subjugated to the Assyrian yoke ; and also, while the Prophets themselves were witnessing the desolation of the Ten Tribes by the Assyrians, they still continued to predict, that the inhabitants of Judea should be led away captive to Babylon.

Will any one assert, that these prophecies, that predictions so improbable, so unlikely to come to pass, were the fabrications of an impostor ? One perusal of Scripture with attention is entirely sufficient to dissipate such an idea. We behold, in the writings of the Prophets, so much diversity in the things on which they treat ; and in the turn of their expressions and thoughts, we find so many

little circumstances recited, which occur naturally and which had such close affinity to the time in which they wrote, that it is quite impossible to believe, that any impostor would have been able to have varied his expressions in such a wonderful manner, or that he could have succeeded in so entirely altering his style. And surely the impostor, who immortalized Cyrus *, by calling him by name in the sacred volume, would not have failed to have bestowed the same honour on Darius and Artaxerxes, who completed the work which Cyrus had begun. A pretended prophet would also have introduced into his predictions, many of those remarkable circumstances, which we find related in those histories given by Ezra and Nehemiah. It would have been as easy to have produced them to after generations as prophecies; and they would have appeared in that shape with much more weight and dignity, than as mere historical facts.

Daniel alludes to the deliverance of the Jews, mentioned by Jeremiah †, and he speaks of the seventy weeks which that Prophet had named, more than once; while he acknowledges also ‡ that these misfortunes happened to Judea in accordance with the predictions pronounced by

* Isai. xliv. 28.

† Jer. xxv. and xxix.

‡ Dan. ix.

Moses to the children of Israel while in the wilderness. Ezra *, many years after Daniel, speaks of this prophecy of Jeremiah ; and we cannot doubt but the predictions and promises of a re-establishment so anxiously looked for (the prospect of which alone could have supported a whole nation, in the patient endurance of a seventy years' bondage in a distant and foreign land,) must have been a constant and public subject of their discourse.

It is then clear and indisputable, that the Books of the Prophets, as well as those of Moses, were composed before their captivity : for since we are constrained to acknowledge this with regard to Jeremiah, the bitterest opposer of Divine truth will see, we feel assured, that it is worse than useless to contend respecting the other Prophets. If Jeremiah predicted the desolation of Jerusalem before it took place, if he foretold the restoration of the Jews before their captivity, he must, it follows, have done so by Divine inspiration ; and if Jeremiah was inspired by God, we certainly can have no difficulty in believing that the other Prophets were equally so. We behold in their writings the same spirit convincing the world of sin, and calling man to righteousness. We see the same fearless threatenings, the same lively exhorta-

* Ezra i. 1.

tions, the same heavenly comfort, the same precious promises ; and we view the same complete fulfilment of their predictions, and all of this in perfect accordance with the Law of Moses, and the promises of the Gospel ; all leading to that one great end, the salvation of sinners through the Saviour. I ask, who is the author of so much truth, so much uniformity, so much consistency ?

We will in this chapter ask one more question : Was the author of the sacred writings, whom infidelity calls an impostor, a friend, or was he an enemy, of the Jewish nation ? We cannot believe him to have been their enemy, since he attributed to them all the advantages of a people chosen by God before all other nations. And if he were their friend, why cover them with the opprobrium of unbelief and idolatry ? Why relate their persecutions of the Prophets, the servants of God ; their continual rebellion and hardness of heart ?

The more we reflect on the Holy Scriptures, the more assured we are of their Divine origin ; the more we read their sacred pages ; the more impossible we see it to be, that falsehood or imposture had any thing to do with their composition. May this be the conviction of all who peruse this book. May it assist in displaying to the minds of those, who are seriously inquiring after truth, the brightness of the pages of Revelation ; and may it be the means of leading him, who now denies his

God, and boldly reviles his Bible, to “ seek the Lord while he may be found, to call upon him while he is near*.” For, assuredly, if he find not the value of true religion, while opportunity is given him, he will, like Dives, discover it when in torment ; and, when it is too late, will call upon that God whom he now rejects.

* Isai. lv. 6.

CHAPTER XVII.

A CONTINUATION OF THE ARGUMENTS IN FAVOUR OF THE DIVINE TRUTH OF THE SCRIPTURES, DRAWN FROM THE PREDICTIONS WHICH THEY CONTAIN.

WE have placed under the head of the second class of predictions all those, which particularly regard the Gentile world. In the days of the prophets there were hardly any among the idolatrous nations, who were not interested in them in a greater or less degree; either by their connection with the Jews, from having reduced them to servitude and bondage, or by having been conquered by, and subjected to, the children of Israel in their turn.

We have already remarked, that sacred history has not given us any clue by which to trace the condition of some of those nations, of which we find Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel predicting the ruin : but if we compare the Bible with profane history, as regards the Assyrians, the Babylonians, Cyrus, the Medes and Persians, and the Egyptians, together with Tyre and Sidon; we shall *discover* sufficient conformity between them to

satisfy our minds, as to the whole of Prophecy ; since the God who taught these predictions to his servants, never would have permitted them, we are assured, to mix up falsehoods with truth, and thus to destroy every barrier between right and wrong, good and evil.

Daniel, who was permitted to penetrate into ages far less obscure than those referred to by the other Prophets, spoke, we know, of Greece, and of the kings of Assyria and of Egypt, who were partakers of the empire of Alexander until in their turn they were subjugated to the Roman yoke. His predictions agreed so exactly with the history of facts, as they in aftertimes occurred, that infidelity has believed, or rather has pretended to believe, that they were forged after the events had taken place. To those who assert this, I shall reply in the words of the Prophet Ezekiel,—“ And the word of the Lord came unto me saying, Son of man, what is that proverb that ye have in the land of Israel, saying, The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth ? Tell them, therefore, Thus saith the Lord God, I will make this proverb to cease, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel, but say unto them, the days are at hand, and the effect of every vision. For there shall be no more any vain vision, nor flattering divination within the house of Israel. For I am the Lord : I will speak, and the word that I shall speak, shall come to pass ; it shall be *no more prolonged* ; for in your days, O rebel-

lions house, will I say the word, and will perform it, saith the Lord God. Again, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, behold they of the house of Israel say, The vision that he seeth is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of the times that are far off. Therefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God. There shall none of my words be prolonged any more; but the words which I have spoken shall be done, saith the Lord God *."

Is it possible that this is the language of an impostor? Could a pretended prophet have written with such confidence? Even the most incredulous cannot be otherwise than struck with awe at the boldness of this address; which, of itself, sufficiently declares its Divine origin. Will any one ask, why the Prophets predicted so many events, which had no connection with the church of God? I reply, that these predictions were of the greatest use, since in those times every nation had its own gods, and the idolaters regarded the only true God, the God of Israel, as a Deity peculiar to that people: it was therefore necessary and proper, that the mighty Jehovah should make it known by his Prophets, that He is the true God, the Lord of heaven and earth, and the Sovereign Disposer of the conditions of all men.

In the third and last class to which we have re-

* Ezek. xii. 21, &c.

duced the predictions, are those which relate to the coming of the Messiah, the calling of the Gentiles, and the final restoration or gathering together of the Jews. These predictions are so clear, and in such numbers, that it is impossible to resist them, except by the most determined obstinacy. The Psalms contain many remarkable passages relating to our Lord, and the universal extension of his kingdom. And the Prophecies of Isaiah are numerous and particular, both with regard to his lowly condition and sufferings on earth; his glorious and heavenly reign, and the universal spread of the Gospel. The fifty-third chapter is of itself a specimen, which carries more evidence with it than page after page of argument. Indeed the whole of the writings of that Prophet display a sweetness, a beauty, and grandeur, joined to the most perfect truth, which proclaim them to be in every expression the composition of God.

I would here pause a few moments, and address myself earnestly to the scattered sons of Abraham. I would entreat them to compare only this Prophet, this one book of Isaiah with the Gospels; and then let them with candour own, whether they can still shut their eyes against the light. Let them tell me whether they can deny that Jesus, the crucified Jesus of Nazareth, is He who "was wounded for our transgressions," who "was bruised for our iniquities," upon whom is "the

chastisement of our peace," and by whose " stripes we are healed."

The other Prophets, as well as Isaiah, abound with so many remarkable passages, that the only ground of astonishment is, not that there are so many Christians, but that there are any sceptics in the world ; and I do not believe that there is such a being as an infidel, who has allowed his soul *a fair chance*, if I may be permitted the expression. The way of the unbeliever commonly is to *starve* his soul into a rejection of the truth : she is denied her spiritual food ; the pages of Revelation are shut against her, the refreshment of prayer and praise is refused to her ; she faints for want of that heavenly manna which is alone to be found in the Bible ; and when, from long abstinence, she has lost all power of enjoying that which should have afforded her support and strength, she declares her only true nourishment to be poison, and in rejecting the word of God, in dashing aside " the cup of salvation," in refusing to partake of " the bread of life," she dies eternally.

This is the true cause of infidelity ; this is the history of the destruction of the soul of the unbeliever : he is a self-murderer, and one of the most determined of suicides. The Bible is not read, we are well convinced, by many who revile its pages : it is to them a *sealed* book, in more senses of the word than one. While by some it is read

from motives of curiosity, or perhaps with a disposition to cavil at every line; read without any sincere wish to improve by its laws, without the slightest desire to be experimentally acquainted with its contents; without any idea of finding an example to follow in its pages, with only a confused notion of God, and the salvation offered through his Son;—and, above all, read without one prayer, without one ejaculation to the God of the Bible, for the teaching of that same Spirit, who taught the truths therein contained to its holy authors.

If any one asks, why the Jews of this day refuse to acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Messiah; I answer by another question: Why did their ancestors rebel against Moses so many times, even while, by the power of God, he worked those miracles which surrounded them on all sides? Why were they so often guilty of idolatry, even under the very denunciations of the Prophets? Wherefore were their severe punishments so soon forgotten? Why were they disobedient again and again? Why did they neglect to repent, though warned and threatened time after time, till their kingdom was destroyed, and themselves carried into captivity?

The infidel is, we know, ready to answer without allowing himself a moment's reflection, that these disorders are strong presumptions that the Jews were not persuaded themselves of the truth of

their religion; and that if they had abandoned it openly, they would have avoided their misfortunes. But how does he make this assertion good, when he sees, by the Jewish history throughout, that the very conduct which he recommends, the occasional abandonment of their religion, brought on them all the afflictions and misfortunes the relation of which forms so large a part of their history?

God promised Abraham, that in his Seed should all nations of the earth be blessed *. In the Saviour of the world, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Judah, and of the house of David, Jesus of Nazareth, born of a pure virgin, we behold this promise performed; and not only do we see that in the person of our Lord those predictions were entirely fulfilled, but we view in him the accomplishment of that prophecy of Moses to the children of Israel, many centuries before his coming, which says, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet, from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him shall ye hearken †." These words carry a peculiar emphasis with them, and cannot in any way be applied either to the Prophets in general, or to any individual of them: they can, we shall find by an attentive examination of them, only relate to Jesus Christ. First, we must remember, that

* Gen. xxii. 18.

† Deut. xviii. 15.

Moses was a type of the Messiah, and that the Jews mystically represented the true people of God of all nations.

Now Moses was appointed by God as the deliverer of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage : Jesus is the deliverer of each " Israelite indeed *," from the bondage of sin and death. The mission of Moses was confirmed by innumerable miracles : our blessed Lord proved the truth of his mission by the power of his marvellous acts. Moses was authorized by God to teach and prescribe laws to the people : Jesus was a Lawgiver and Teacher, by the authority of his own Divine nature. The laws of Moses were promulgated with mighty thunderings, to convince the terror-struck people of the awful nature of the covenant of works : the laws of Jesus were accompanied with the voice of love and kindness, which filled the people with wonder and admiration, and displayed to them the tender mercies of the covenant of grace. Moses taught the people, that " the wages of sin is death : " Jesus unfolded to his followers, that " the gift of God is eternal life †," through himself. Thus we see, that the covenant of works was established with threatenings ; that of grace with promises. And, notwithstanding this difference, we must plainly discover in Moses the type or foreshadow

* John i. 47.

† Rom. vi. 23.

of the Messiah, of whom alone he could have said, a Prophet "like unto me."

It is true, that in many predictions of holy writ, a two-fold meaning is contained, the first being applicable to the period of their announcement, or to some time almost immediately subsequent to it, and the development of the second being left to future ages. Thus, in this prophecy, it is easy to see, that God permitted it to be in some degree applicable to Joshua, who succeeded Moses as the leader and the lawgiver of the children of Israel: but it would be taking the words in a very confined sense, to suppose that they only alluded to this immediate successor of Moses, particularly when on examination we find the prediction so beautifully fulfilled in the person of our blessed Lord.

We have not space to enter at length into the examination of the predictions of Daniel, which are very clear and full as to the time at which the Saviour was to be sacrificed. We must content ourselves with quoting the Prophet, and with offering a few remarks on this passage, without entering into long arguments, which would not in any degree benefit the reader, but would rather serve to puzzle and mislead those who do not think *deeply*, and who could only be persuaded to take a cursory view of the subject. Daniel wrote, that the angel said, "Seventy weeks are determined

upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and the prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know, therefore, and understand that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks and three score and two weeks. The street shall be built again, and the wall even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself; and the people and the prince that shall come, shall destroy the city and the sanctuary, and the end thereof shall be with a flood; and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week; and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate; even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate *."

Now, it appears very clearly that, in the seventy weeks of Daniel, are comprised the total ruin of Jerusalem and the temple; for we must observe, that *after* the seven weeks, and the three score and two weeks, Messiah was to be cut off, which

* Dan. ix. 24—27.

brings his death to that week in the middle of which the sacrifice and the oblation were to cease: which virtually was the case; for to the true believer the necessity of the sacrifice of the altar no longer remained, after our Lord had pronounced these remarkable words, "It is finished *." Yet we know that this "form of godliness, without the power," continued till the Roman armies had swept away not only every vestige of the Jewish ceremonies, but of the temple itself; thus giving us another certain proof of the truth of Prophecy, and of the Divine origin of the Bible.

We cannot here enumerate the many other prophecies, which are to be found in holy writ relating to the person of the Messiah, which have had so complete an accomplishment in the circumstances of the life and sufferings of our Lord. Nor shall we in this place attempt to collect all those which relate to the calling of the Gentiles, and the final restoration of the Jews. The former we have seen the fulfilment of in such extraordinary measure, that we neither can deny nor doubt their being entirely realized at last, together with those which are confined to the children of Israel, the development of which we know is both as to time and manner still in the hands of Him alone by whom all prophecy was given.

* John xix. 30.

This brings us to a conclusion of our considerations of the prophetic part of the Old Testament : but we cannot quit the subject, without once more reminding our readers, that one prediction fulfilled is the establishment of all the prophecies contained in holy writ ; that one miracle proved to have been performed seals the Divine truth of every one related in the Scriptures ; that the demonstration of one command from God gives the authority of Jehovah to the whole Bible : for who can foresee future events, but He who predetermined them in his wisdom ? Who can controul the powers of nature, but He by whose word all nature was formed ? And who should have dared to say, “ Thou shalt have none other gods but me,” except our God, the God of Revelation, the Lord of heaven and earth ?

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TRUTH OF SCRIPTURE PROVED FROM THE
NATURE OF THE SACRED WRITINGS.

WHEN we consider the sublimity of the doctrines taught by Moses,—the holiness of his laws,—the excellency of his promises; the duty which he prescribes to men of loving God beyond all earthly possessions,—of serving him in defiance of every danger; when we remember the hope of eternity which he gives to all nations through the posterity of Abraham, we are compelled to acknowledge that the design of the Author is far too elevated to have been the production of human reason alone. We are obliged to confess, that the book, which contains so much wisdom, in which is related so many wonders, carries within itself, at its very commencement, the most convincing proofs of its Divine origin.

When philosophers have argued in what true happiness consisted, they have, after pages of discussion, ended perhaps by telling us, that we shall discover this precious gem in acting according to the dictates of conscience, and bearing with

fortitude the evils which we cannot avoid : but they have given us with this no certain hope to cling to,—no safe haven from the storms of life : they have not told us of the place where “ the wicked cease from troubling,” where “ the weary are at rest * :” they have not directed us to “ the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world † ;” they have not pointed us to that heavenly city where believers shall find no more sorrow, nor crying, nor any more pain, because “ God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes ‡ .”

Let us devote a few minutes to the application of this reasoning of the philosophers. We will suppose a person happy enough to acquit himself of his duty for a time. I cannot see how this will lay a foundation for his patience in an hour of trial. How will the remembrance of his uprightness give him fortitude in sickness and pain ? How will it supply him with submission in the time of penury and want ? How will it quiet his fears, and stifle the memory of former sins at the hour of death ? Suffering in body, confused in mind, he is going he knows not where. He is like a vessel without either rudder or compass, entering an unknown sea ; uncertain in its course, and the sport of every wave.

Believe me, ye who stand on this precipice ;

* Job iii. 17.

† John i. 29.

‡ Rev. xxi. 4.

listen to the voice of truth, ye who, in the pride of human intellect, are looking for what you call a *reasonable* happiness; search in the pages of the Bible for *true* happiness; depend on it, the virtue of the philosopher will only dissipate in vexation. It will assuredly relax in trial, and will entirely fall short in suffering. Human nature has no virtue to call *her own*; nothing good to take hold of *in herself*; her *brightest* ornaments, her goodliest apparel are all *borrowed* from Revelation. The vessel in which she sails must be guided by religion; the Bible must be her rudder and compass, or she will not find the desired haven at last. In its sacred pages we learn, "that whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth *," and that he pitieth his people, "like as a father pitieth his children †." By its holy precepts we are taught, that in obeying our heavenly Father, we are following the example of our blessed Lord; and we are promised "that all things work together for good to them that love God ‡." This religion, the religion which the inspired writers teach us, is worthy of God, because it instructs us to know and to love him, to honour and serve him: and it is fit for man, as it alone leads him to that "peace which passeth all understanding §;" it gives him that "perfect

* Heb. xii. 6.

† Psalm ciii. 13.

‡ Rom. viii. 28.

§ Phil. iv. 7.

peace *," that tranquillity of soul, which nothing besides can supply,—a peace and tranquillity preferable to all the riches in the world ; and, instead of the applauses of our own deceitful hearts, it leads us earnestly to desire the sound of our Lord's voice in those encouraging words, " Well done, thou good and faithful servant,—enter thou into the joy of thy Lord †."

God, religion, and man, are all three, from their very nature, inseparably united. From the bounty of the Creator, instinctively as it were, arises the adoration of the creature ; consequently the worship of a Supreme Being, we have before remarked, has been natural to mankind in all ages, countries, and nations. But pure worship, the worship of the heart, " in spirit and in truth ‡," is alone to be learnt in the Bible. He, who enjoined the ceremony of circumcision, requires also the circumcision of the heart. He, who instituted the outward sign of water in baptism, teaches us the necessity of the inward cleansing of the soul from sin. The Old and the New Testament, Moses and the Prophets, Jesus and the Evangelists, all call upon man for a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness ; and each of them instructs him to seek by prayer the regenerating assistance of the Holy Spirit for this mighty work.

* Isai. xxvi. 3. † Matt. xxv. 21. ‡ John iv. 24.

From whence comes it, that the sacred volume alone conducts us into such a perfect path? Why do other books attempt to purify only the stream, while the Bible at once searches into its very source, and declares the heart of man to be a fountain of every corruption; to be “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked?*” Why does holy writ, and holy writ alone, contain such petitions as that of King David, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me?†” What other reply can we make to questions, each of which contains in itself the weight of a demonstration, but that the Bible is Divine in its precepts, as well as in its origin; that it is the work of God, and not of man?

Great we know is the depravity of the human heart; but whence do we learn to understand this clearly, except in the Bible? And where, in what other volume besides, are we informed, not only of what man is by nature, but what he may become by grace?

Now, there are two sorts of unbelievers: the one obstinately rejects the truths of revelation; the other denies them, because he is too indolent to examine them: the one asserts that he is not born in sin; the other seeks not to be born again. They are both in equal danger, as regards eternity;

* Jer. xvii. 9.

† Psalm li. 10.

the one is among the *wicked* *, the other belongs to those people, who “*forget* God †;” and if the king of terrors should surprise them, while in an unconverted state, they will both equally discover the truth of revelation in torment. May the Lord of all knowledge and power unseal the eyes of all such, that they may see their imminent peril, and flee from the “wrath to come,” before it is too late.

Those, who will attentively and seriously examine the pages of holy writ, will not remain for any length of time blind to the beauties with which they abound: in every part they will perceive the clearness and accuracy of truth, and will receive a ray of Divine light into their own souls by studying it. We never search the Scriptures *in vain*; for in them, and in them alone, we have “eternal life.” If we look for a confession of faith, how emphatically are we supplied by holy Job! “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God ‡.” If we desire an exhortation, a call to righteousness, we might search in all the volumes in the world, before we should find one which would bear a comparison with those words of Isaiah,—“Seek ye the Lord while

* † Psalm ix. 17.

‡ Job xix. 25, 26.

he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon *."

I must finish these examples with one drawn from the last chapter of Malachi. For sublimity of style, and awful majesty of thought, it is unequalled, and forms a proper conclusion to the Prophecies of the Old Testament. "For behold the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble. And the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings, and ye shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet, in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of Hosts †." Once more, I repeat, where except in the Bible can we discover warnings and threatenings so awfully, so majestically worded? Where else can we find encouragement so powerfully, so beautifully set forth? Oh may the Sun of Righteousness indeed arise with healing on his wings, to all who peruse these pages!

* Isai. lv. 6, 7.

† Mal. iv. 1, 2, 3.

May some who have never before been sufficiently awakened to do so, find in this volume a stimulus to excite them to read, and meditate on the revealed word of God ! And may both reader and writer obtain grace to understand its sacred truths, to their eternal salvation !

We know enough of human nature from our own hearts, readily to believe, that, had any uninspired writer undertaken to invent the imaginary history of a nation set apart as God's peculiar people, the work would have been conducted in a very different way from that which Moses adopted. What would he not have said of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, the progenitors of this favoured people ? An author, who was composing a fabulous history by the rules only of his imagination, would surely have represented these men as entirely faultless : his description of them would have attributed nothing to them but what was great, holy, and perfect ; nothing inconsistent with the honour of their high calling. He would not have failed to have given us a brilliant account of the supposed conduct of Moses while in the court of Pharaoh ; he would have described him as a brave and an all-accomplished hero, exciting at once the envy and admiration of all men. How would he not have extolled that deliverer who was to lead this chosen nation out of bondage ! And surely he would have added to all this, a

highly coloured picture of the faithful obedience of this favoured people to their God ; of their devotion to his service ; of their constancy in their duty equally in times of happiness and prosperity as when under trouble and in sorrow ; of their purity of heart ; of their glorification of their God, not only with their lips, but by the conduct of their lives.


But, on the contrary, what do we find ? What in reality is the history of the Jews ? Not surely such an one as finite man would have devised. Whatever the effect might be, the truth is simply related ; facts are told as they really are ; man is acknowledged to have been continually a sinner, and his God to have been ungratefully deserted by him. Moses might have made a hero of Abraham, if he had contented himself with telling us that he had quitted his country ; that he had left his kindred and his home at the command of God ; that he had fought and vanquished those kings who had taken prisoner his nephew Lot : and that, to shew his obedience to the Most High, he had prepared to sacrifice his only son, that child of promise, through whose posterity he looked for a blessing on all mankind. Wherefore did Moses attach to this an account also of the fears and the weakness of the Patriarch ? We say, because he was simply reciting the truth.

In the history of Jacob, we discover many cir-

cumstances inconsistent with the character of one who professed reverentially to fear God. The birthright obtained of Esau, appears at first sight like an undue advantage; but it is rather to be considered as a proof of Jacob's faith in the promises of Jehovah. Jacob valued the birthright, because it implied the possession of the blessing given to Abraham. Esau valued it not, even for this consideration, and sold it for a mess of pottage. The one chose the things of time; the other valued those of eternity. We cannot justify the way in which Jacob *craftily* obtained his father's blessing: but Moses was not creating an imaginary hero; he was relating plain facts; and these very circumstances serve to prove the truth of the history most effectually. Thus we see, by the nature of their relations, the sacred authors could have had no other view than to represent persons and events exactly as they were; and, in so doing, they faithfully relate to us, without favour or concealment, whether these persons violated their duty to God, or kept his commandments. For this purpose the recitals of occurrences in the private lives of the Patriarchs, were much more calculated than merely a description of their public characters would have been. A prince upon his throne, or a commander at the head of an army, is in reality little known as to his disposition, and the qualifications of his heart.

Follow him into his family; enter the privacy of his closet; and what he actually is, will soon betray itself to our observation: and often in those moments he will discover to us a wicked and corrupt heart, which was concealed completely from public view. Historians, whose only object is to establish the fame of their heroes, are satisfied with giving descriptions of their distinguished actions, and sounding their praises according to outward appearances. But the sacred historians, who made truth and sincerity their inviolable rules, represented those of whom they spake, not only with their good, but with their evil qualifications, and their object in so doing was to instruct us of the sinful nature of man, and the perfection of God. Thus, every one of their recitals and reflections are expressly in connection with God and religion, and are calculated to teach us the true state of the case between ourselves and our Maker.

It is most unjust in the enemies of Revelation to object to some of the histories contained in the Bible, because they are what they call dishonouring to God, and humbling to man. Humbling to man most assuredly they are, but valuable and proper as they find place in holy writ, giving a testimony to its pages which infidelity cannot refute. Impiety, too, will sneer at other circumstances, and call them trifling minutiae, beneath the dignity of the Supreme Being, and unworthy




of so important a subject as the redemption of man. Minutiæ or not, if we discover and acknowledge, in some of these, evidences of a fear of God; and in others, of a disregard and contempt of his laws; and if we beheld in the former an encouragement to piety, and in the latter an inducement to avoid the punishment of the disobedient; their use is most obvious, and they perfectly agree with the design of their authors,—namely, the instruction of man in every age.

The sacred history cannot be the work of an impostor, for another reason, which we have before touched on; namely, that in its various recitals, the customs of the age in which each historian wrote are strictly preserved during the space of nearly three thousand years. In every period all is consistent, and according to truth; the time of each event is fixed by the manner of its relation. Now, there can be no doubt but an impostor would have betrayed himself by some improbabilities; some inconsistencies; some circumstances at variance with the customs of such remote ages, and would have fallen into expressions and recitals more nearly allied to his own time. This perfect agreement in every respect must be considered as one of the most certain indications of the truth of holy writ: indeed, they so abound on all sides, that it seems to me a far greater difficulty to doubt than to believe.

In the account given by Moses at the beginning of the Book of Genesis, we behold a true picture of the simplicity of the first ages. We find, as we proceed, that as the human race multiplied, men formed themselves into regular states, and knowledge of various kinds gradually unfolded itself.

In the beginning of Exodus, Moses relates only a very few particulars of his own life; but that short account is quite sufficient to answer all the purposes of sacred history. After having instructed us of the miraculous manner in which he had been preserved from that death to which Pharaoh had condemned all the male children of the Israelites, he leaves us in perfect ignorance of himself for the next forty years; he maintains a profound silence on all that passed in the Egyptian court during his residence there. Now, an impostor, we may readily imagine, would not have failed to have filled this void with a detail of famous exploits and wonderful enterprises. In Josephus, who, as an uninspired historian, is worthy of credit, we find many recitals of the greatness of Moses during his sojourn among the Egyptians. While these circumstantial relations in many things serve as a confirmation of holy writ, they at once present us with an illustration of the sensible difference which exists between the sacred volume and all other books.



Moses gives us an account of his visit to his brethren, at the end of forty years *, and he tells us of the death of the Egyptian by his hand, as a necessary part of the history. And, as truth was his object, he does not fail to describe to us his own fears and weakness, together with his unwillingness to speak to the people of Israel, though commanded by the Lord himself to do so. But, on the other hand, he recites to us his subsequent courage and intrepidity, when engaged in leading the people forth. Let us consider the character of Moses, as given by himself; what a compound does it present of hesitation and firmness, of irresolution and courage! What a demonstration of the weakness of human nature in the receipt of his commission! What a glorious proof of the power of the Holy Spirit in the fulfilment of his ministry! The first made him hesitate, and even refuse to carry to his brethren the message of the Almighty; and the second enabled him to stand boldly before the throne of Pharaoh, demanding the release of the people in the name of the God of their fathers, by whose power he performed his mighty wonders in that prince's sight.

In speaking of these miracles, how do we find him relating them? He merely gives us a plain recital of facts; unaccompanied by expressions of

* Exod. iii. iv.

astonishment or eulogy. We are not interrupted by exclamations of admiration ; we are not met by persuasions to lead us into a belief of the truth ; but we are simply told, that by the power of God such events were accomplished,—that his will ordained such heavy judgments on the Egyptians,—and that with a mighty hand he brought the people of Israel forth. This unadorned statement of circumstances, as they occurred ; this plain relation of things, in themselves so surprising ; is to my mind another strong proof of that Divine inspiration, which accompanies holy writ in every part.

The recitals, which Moses gives us of the wonders of the Almighty, may be compared to the statements of the almoner of a great king, who, without boasting of generosity on the part of his master, simply relates to us, that he was appointed by him to distribute large donations to the poor and wretched. They are not told as extraordinary facts, but as the effect of that power which can exercise itself with as much ease in raising the mighty whirlwind, as in producing the summer's breeze ; which can display itself as readily in separating the waves of the ocean, as in supplying the gentle stream from the fountain.

How could any human being have known the style in which to pourtray the wonders of the Almighty with correctness ? Humanity, left to

itself, in recording a miracle, would have adopted all the figures of rhetoric for the occasion. Any one, guided only by his reason, would have doubted, lest he should not express himself with sufficient grandeur. But Omnipotence willed that his wonders should owe nothing to the powers of eloquence. And the sum of what Moses here teaches us may be comprised in these two sentences: God delivered his people by great and mighty wonders, and the people rejoiced and gave him the glory.

But let us examine the conduct of the Israelites in the desert; let us view them frequently murmuring; as often openly revolting, or secretly disobedient. Let us behold the same Lord whose outstretched arm brought them forth from Egypt, continually working miracles in their favour; and let us see these stiff-necked people constantly forgetful of these favours, and bowing down to idols of wood and stone. Would it ever have entered the head of an impostor thus to describe a people who had been and were so cherished by God?

Surely, if the history of the Jews had been a mere invention, to glorify that nation, to place it in a scale above all others, a very different way would have been taken; altogether another plan would have been adopted. These people would have been described as faithful and obedient, instead of rebellious and inconstant. Again we say, sacred truth alone compelled a recital of facts

so dishonouring to a nation thus chosen of God ; a relation dishonouring to Moses himself, of which we have given an example in his reluctance to obey God at the commencement of his ministry.

Now, if Moses had sought his own honour, without any regard to truth, we should have been told of the chastisements of the people for outrages and insults towards himself as the minister of God : but no, we find the people often disobedient, and the minister not always strictly right ; and we learn that they all were refused an entrance into the promised land. The Lord not even suffering Moses and Aaron to set their feet therein, and conferring that privilege on two men only of all those who left the bondage of Egypt at ages capable of distinguishing between good and evil*.

The infidel does not fail to draw, from these relations, an objection to the truth of holy writ ; and he asks, whether it is possible to reconcile the account of so many rebellions, so many iniquities, and so many deserved chastisements in consequence of them, with the innumerable benefits with which God surrounded the Jewish nation.

To remove this difficulty entirely, we have first to remember God's promise to Abraham, the commencement of which he saw fit to accomplish

* Num. xiv. 28, &c.

miraculously. And in this relation given by Moses, we behold a continuance of the same miraculous power exerting itself to carry it fully into effect : next, let us attentively consider the genius of this people ; let us not forget the disadvantages under which they had laboured during their sojourn in Egypt ; and then perhaps we shall find a sufficient reason for their neglect of true religion, for their ingratitude in the midst of so many wonders, particularly when we consider that their condition as sons of fallen Adam was not altered by this preference shewn to them by Jehovah. These people had been for upwards of four hundred years surrounded by the idolatries of Egypt, and their conduct was neither purer nor more correct perhaps than that of the idolaters themselves. Though they wept and prayed to the true God while under the lash of the Egyptians, there was no true repentance—no conversion of heart among them. Their tears and their prayers arose from the pain of their bodily sufferings, from impatience at the weight of their bondage ; not from godly sorrow for sin. When they beheld themselves so wonderfully delivered, they remembered the promises which God had given to Abraham, and they believed that nothing would turn the Almighty from accomplishing it in their own persons. The wonders wrought for them, only strengthened them

in this idea : accustomed to miracles, miracles made no impression on them ; or, if they made any, it was so slight that the least temptation, the smallest annoyance, effaced the effect of them altogether. Any one, who is even slightly acquainted with the corruptions of his own heart, will not be surprised at this history of rebellion and disobedience : he will see nothing more in the relation of Moses, than a faithful picture of human nature in an unconverted state.

A miracle may astonish a sinner for a time ; it may overcome him for a moment, but it will not convert him. The infidel who scoffs at holy writ, if he saw the wonders of Egypt taking place before his eyes, would be alarmed and uneasy until the effect was gone by ; but no sooner would the hand of the Almighty be stayed, than he would pronounce the miracle to be merely the effect of some natural cause, or perhaps he would admit it to be some unusual effort of nature.

If the love of holiness dwell not in the heart, if the hope of eternal life be not sufficient to engage the attention, all proof will be disregarded, all argument will be unavailing. In fact, we must allow every operation of nature to be miraculous, when we properly consider the subject ; but even if what we usually mean by a miracle were to come to pass, that too, I am persuaded, would

be unheeded or denied by those, who carelessly or obstinately reject revelation, not only in word but in deed.

The Israelites having been taught the promises of God by those who lived before them, saw the miracles which God wrought in the execution of his word, almost without wonder or awe. If they were astonished, it was only for a moment. If they repented, their repentance passed away like a shadow. It led neither to conversion nor holiness, but ended with the punishment which produced it. And in these very inconsistencies we find a further proof of the truth of the whole history ; instead of discovering reasons for rejecting it, as infidelity would assert.

The posterity of those rebellious Israelites, who died in the wilderness, were taught by the death of their parents, and their own possession of the land of Canaan, to serve with faithfulness the Lord in whose strength they had conquered ; and they continued to do so during the life of Joshua : but very soon after the decease of this leader, into how many abominations did this stiff-necked people fall ! What disobedience, and what backslidings do we not read of in Judges ! for what reason could an impostor have invented such relations ?

David, we learn, was placed on the throne by the command of God, to the exclusion of the fa-

mily of Saul; and holy writ teaches us, that he was “ a man after God’s own heart *;” but we also are told of the faults, and even of the crimes, of David; his deep repentance and self-abasement. Again, I ask, could any thing but truth have led to such a history? In succeeding parts of holy writ, we read of the gross idolatry and wickedness of several of the kings of Judah, and of the many abominations of the kings of Israel, till the captivity of the people, and the destruction of their cities was permitted by God.— This is indeed a dark side to the picture; but the very gloominess of it demonstrates the correctness with which it is drawn.

We cannot follow the Prophets in their various warnings and denunciations to this ungrateful people: it must suffice here to bring to our remembrance, that the Law of Moses was the foundation and the guide both of the one and of the other; that their censures, their exhortations and promises, all related to it, and were in perfect unison with it.

Will any one say, that the Holy Spirit did not especially inspire and animate these men? Will any one deny that the very nature of their predictions is a striking proof of their Divine origin? Will any one assert, that they uttered their awful


* Acts xiii. 22.

denunciations unassisted by God ? If, after the numerous proofs with which these few chapters supply the reader in favour of revelation, he can still refuse to acknowledge the pages of the Bible to be the words of celestial truth, we pity him, and must leave him to his worse than pagan ignorance, the ignorance of wilful unbelief, devoutly praying the Lord to have mercy upon him, and open the eyes of his understanding to the marvellous light of Divine truth, before the awful summons of death shall put an interminable obstacle to the possibility of so glorious a change.

CHAPTER XIX.

ON THE STYLE OF THE SACRED WRITERS.

It is very difficult, indeed we may say it is nearly impossible, to judge properly of the style of the Old Testament; because the Hebrew, in which it was originally written, has long been what is emphatically termed a dead language; a language which has fallen into disuse, and which is no longer spoken by any of the nations of the earth. Ever since the dispersion of the Jews, the Hebrew may be considered as such; and no book is known to be in existence except the Old Testament itself, which can assist us in forming a correct opinion of it. Notwithstanding this disadvantage, we cannot but discern in the pages of revelation an eloquence of thought, and an eloquence of words, beyond the productions of other authors. And this superiority is very evident, not only in our own language, but in the various other translations of the Bible, which are in this day distributed into almost every country in the world; and so numerous are these that all nations now can truly say, with St. Luke, not only "*hear we,*" but "*read we,*"



every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born, the wonderful works of God *."

By eloquence of thought, we mean a clear and distinct representation of those things of which we wish to give others an idea. And by eloquence of words, we mean the clothing of those ideas in concise and elegant expressions, with the same clearness and distinctness, by a good choice of words, as regards the subjects which we wish to express ; neither laboured nor coarse, but pure, delicate, and natural ; such words as would appear to flow spontaneously from our thoughts, in the simple relation of any fact, so that every impression conveyed by them may be in strict conformity with the truth of the whole.


If we are expressing our thoughts on any passion of the mind, our words ought to convey the full force of our meaning, and our expressions should be sufficiently strong for the subject which gives birth to them. To obtain the attention of the hearer, they must be calculated to lead him to participate in the feelings of the speaker. If a virtuous action is related, the spirit of emulation ought to be awakened in the breasts of those who listen. If the piety of the believer is described, it should be in language calculated to fix itself in the heart of the auditor, by shewing in glowing

* Acts ii. 8, 11.

colours the power of religion on the soul. If the evil passions of human nature are pourtrayed, it should be in a manner likely to raise the desire in our minds of overcoming the corrupt affections of that nature through grace. This I call eloquence of thought, and eloquence of words. I cannot here define them more at length : it is not my purpose to enter into a full and regular explanation of the rules of eloquence. What I desire to do, is only to say enough to enable us to form something like clear notions of the style of the sacred writers.

Now those, who are at all acquainted with the Bible, will easily trace in its pages all the essentials of true eloquence. The style of holy writ is just, natural, clear, and concise ; and entirely conformed to the subject. The expressions of the sacred writers are in perfect unison with their ideas ; and they convey to our minds correct notions of what they would represent to us.

It is true that the language of some of the authors of the Old Testament is more simple than that of others. What does this amount to ? It only proves that there is the same variation among them, as among other men ; that some of these writers expressed themselves with more elegance and perspicuity than the rest. Though we assert the Divine authority of the whole of holy writ, we have said that we do not contend for the actual



inspiration of the Holy Spirit in the choice of *every word*: therefore this difference of style does not weaken or destroy the authenticity of any part of it. Besides which, we should remember, that we cannot now fully appreciate the mode of expression employed by the sacred authors, we cannot enter into each delicate turn of a sentence, from our ignorance of the original language. The Hebrew, no doubt, resembled all other languages in that respect: it had its *idioms*, and its peculiar phrases, the immediate sense of which could not be rendered with equal beauty of expression. In a translation, every language will lose more or less of its original sweetness: there is a terseness of expression, which every language possesses for itself, which cannot be exactly conveyed into another; for instance, Horace says, "*Bella matribus detestata.*" Who will say that much more is not conveyed by these Latin words than can be produced by the literal translation, "*Mothers hate war?*"

The Hebrew is peculiarly a figurative language, and abounds with many expressions which we can appreciate the force of in the sacred volume, notwithstanding the disadvantages of a translation, and our ignorance of the original. And we must allow it to be a composition abounding in richness of imagery, and originality of idea; in beauty of simile, and power of expression, beyond any other

writings in the world, whether ancient or modern. From whence is derived this superiority, this originality, I ask the reviler of revelation ? How does the Bible obtain this wonderful excellency ?

The sacred authors have, from the very nature of their subject, observed an extraordinary solemnity in their discourses. It is God who speaks by the mouth of his Prophets. There is something grand in the ideas which we attach to what God would say : but God addresses himself to all ; both the ignorant and the learned, the simple and the wise ; and these messages are conveyed to the people in a manner which all may understand. There is an awful dignity about them, at the same time that there is a simplicity, which carries with it the clearness of truth to the most uninstructed person. When God reproaches the Israelites for their wilful ignorance of him, he says, “ The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib ; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider *.” When Isaiah impresses on the people the nothingness of man in the sight of his Creator, he does it with a simplicity, and yet with a power which the pages of holy writ alone display, saying, “ Behold the nations are as a drop of a bucket ; and are counted as the small dust of the balance ; behold he taketh up the isles as a very little

* Isai. i. 3.

thing *.” How completely does this describe man as he must appear in the sight of his Maker ! The author of the sixty-second Psalm follows up the same idea most emphatically, in the following words : “ Surely men of low degree are vanity ; and men of high degree are a lie : to be laid in the balance they are altogether lighter than vanity†.” If we admit, which I do not see how it is possible to avoid doing, that the ideas, which the sacred authors have conveyed to us, are just, clear, and admirably suited to their subject, I cannot discover any reason why we should imagine their style to have been either gross or obscure.

Let us consider the expressions in which Moses clothes his ideas, when he gives the people their laws : even through the medium of a translation, do not they convey to us in a grand, concise, and comprehensive manner, the commands of the mighty Jehovah ?

Where but in the Decalogue can we find so few words containing so many important instructions ? Where else but in holy writ was the duty of judges set forth so expressly, and yet so concisely ? “ Thou shalt not wrest judgment : thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift ; for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous ‡.”

* Isai. xl. 15. † Psalm lxii. 9. ‡ Deut. xvi. 19.

When Moses spoke to the people of their duty, with what plainness did he set forth the practicability of their knowing it! "For this commandment, which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up to heaven and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us and bring it unto us, that we may have it and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it*."

In another place we find him, after having represented the promises and goodness of God, saying, "And now Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God; to walk in his ways; and to love Him and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul†." When Moses threatened the Israelites with the misfortunes which their disobedience would bring on themselves, he ended his denunciations in the following remarkable manner: "And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee, and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life. In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even; and at even thou shalt

* Deut. xxx. 11, &c.

† Deut. x. 12.

say, Would God it were morning; for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see *."

From these few examples, it is impossible to do other than allow, that the thoughts and the style of Moses fully sustain each other, and are equally worthy of their Divine origin. When we find Moses, or any other of the sacred authors reciting any given fact, we see that they invariably do so with the utmost clearness and simplicity. We neither discover obscurity of style, nor superfluity of language in their relations. All is plain and natural, calculated for the purposes of truth alone.

Thus, when Moses instructs us of God's command to Abraham to sacrifice his son †, he does not arrest the history by recounting to us the yearnings of nature in the bosom of Abraham. He does not detain us by descriptions of the heart-bleedings of the parent, at the prospect of an event so trying. He simply tells us, and yet in a manner which must affect every reader, that God commanded, and that Abraham obeyed; and that having proved the faith of his servant, the Lord provided himself a lamb for a burnt-offering.

Where is there a more affecting narrative than that of the history of Joseph? His misfortunes, and consequent elevation, are at once powerful

* Deut. xxviii. 66, 67.

† Gen. xxii.

illustrations of the wonders of God's providence, working all things together for good for those that love him. And it also impresses on our minds the force of the promise contained in those words of our Lord, in his Sermon on the Mount; "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you *."

And what can be more pathetically affectionate towards his brothers? What better calculated to convey to our minds a clear idea of Joseph's faith in God, than that single expression, those simple words, "So now, it was not you that sent me hither, but God †." What a spirit of forgiveness too is breathed in that short sentence!

The Book of Proverbs would supply us with many examples of heavenly wisdom, conveyed in a style, which is unequalled both in conciseness and comprehensiveness; but we must here satisfy ourselves with one: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding: in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths ‡." What power and what conviction are contained in those few words in Ecclesiastes! "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart; and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that

* Matt vi. 33.

† Gen. xlv. 8.

‡ Prov. iii. 5.

for all these things God will bring thee into judgment *.”

How pathetic are the prophets in their exhortations ! how keen in their censures, and simple in their relations ! yet how elevated they are when the sublimity of their subject requires it ! Is it possible to imagine a bolder style and nobler figures than the Book of Isaiah displays, in almost every part, more especially in the twenty-third chapter, when he predicts the destruction of Tyre ? How magnificently does Ezekiel express the anger of the Lord to the Jewish people, in the following passage ! “ Wherefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Ye eat with the blood, and lift up your eyes toward your idols, and shed blood : and shall ye possess the land ? Ye stand upon your sword, ye work abomination, and ye defile every one his neighbour’s wife : and shall ye possess the land ? Say thou thus unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, As I live, surely they that are in the wastes shall fall by the sword ; and him that is in the open field will I give to the beasts to be devoured ; and they that be in the forts, and in the caves, shall die of the pestilence ; for I will lay the land most desolate, and the pomp of her strength shall cease ; and the mountains of Israel shall be desolate, that none shall pass through.

* Eccles. xi. 9.

Then shall they know that I am the LORD, when I have laid the land most desolate because of all their abominations which they have committed*."

We could produce endless examples in support of our argument if our limits would allow ; and we could examine, Book after Book, in the Sacred Volume, again and again, and each time we could discover some fresh excellency, some new beauty, which would, if possible, more fully stamp Divine truth upon the whole.

What a singular and delightful composition are the Psalms of David ! with what true devotion are they filled ! what a prophetic spirit do they contain ! Where is the man who can read them, and not partake in some degree of the holy fervour of the author ? Who can read his praises of God without joining with David, in glorifying his Maker in soul and spirit ? Who can dwell on the penitence of the Psalmist, without lifting his thoughts to God in contrition for his own wrong doing ? Who can remain unmoved while he accompanies David in that emphatic petition, "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin ; for I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me ?" †

It is necessary now to leave the examination

* Ezek. xxxiii. 25—29.

† Psalm li. 2. 3.

of the style of the Old Testament, and draw this chapter to a close with a few remarks which the subject seems to require. After these examples, we cannot but allow holy writ to claim a just superiority, in style as well as in matter, over all other writings in the known world; and, at the same time, we must admit this pre-eminence to be a demonstration of the clearest kind of its Divine origin.

We have before said, that no other Book but the Bible gives us any thing like a correct idea of the perfection of God; that the compositions of none other, but the sacred writers, teach us the true nature of man. And we know, that a preacher never essentially moves his hearers until he not only approaches the style, but declares to them the matter of holy writ: the more he does this, the more frequently and aptly he strengthens his discourse by passages from Scripture, the more his subject will arrest the attention, and fix itself in the hearts of his hearers. A sermon may contain many brilliant passages, many rich ideas and pure expressions; a preacher may have a fine voice, an excellent delivery, and an eloquent style; his periods may be well turned, and his expressions well chosen; yet, with all this, the "one thing needful" may be wanting: he may, for a time, astonish the ear; he may amuse the understanding; but if his discourse

contain not the spirit and power of the Gospel, it will not reach the heart, and it will not in reality benefit his hearers : they will not be taught by him to discover their natural depravity, their indwelling sin ; and he will never lead them to seek for that mighty change which the Spirit of God alone can produce, and which must take place before they can inherit the promises.

If a preacher take not the word of God for his ensample, none will be effectually persuaded to seek refreshment at the waters of life—to none will the bread from heaven be rightly divided—the “ broken hearted ” will not be bound up ; the “ feeble knees ” will not be strengthened ; the captive will not be taught where to apply for freedom, and the sick in soul will not be led to the heavenly Physician. In a word, no sinner will be awakened, no penitent comforted, no Christian assured.

Such a preacher, it is true, may both surprise and delight his hearers ; but the surprise will not last long, and the delight will as quickly vanish : even the worldly will be disappointed, but pious people will be disheartened, when they discover nothing in such a display of rhetoric which can point the way to salvation ; nothing which can lead to sanctification.

But when the preacher knows the value, and has felt the power, of Divine truth ; when he is acquainted experimentally with its influence on

the heart; he then, indeed, can benefit his audience; he then will *effectually* secure the attention of his hearers. He can tell them, that man is a fallen creature, that he is sinful in his very nature, and that even when that nature is changed by grace, the corruptions of the first Adam cling to him in such a manner, that “when he would do good evil is present with him*.” and he will teach them this with fervour, because his own heart acknowledges its truth; he will tell them that all have sinned: for he feels himself among those who have broken the holy Law of God; he confesses that his feet have often wandered, even since his heart has possessed the sincere desire to walk in the strait path; and that he daily has occasion to deplore his imperfect performance of every Christian duty; while he earnestly teaches that our Lord has said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments†.” He will not fail to declare, in the emphatic words of St. Paul, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief‡.” And in the equally impressive language of St. Peter he will pronounce, that “there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved§”,

* Rom. vii. 21. † John xiv. 15. ‡ 1 Tim. i. 15.
§ Acts iv. 12.

being himself, by the gift of the Holy Spirit, possessed of an assured hope of salvation, through faith in that name *alone*. He who preaches these truths ; he who has felt them, whatever plainness of speech he may use, is the only true “ ambassador for Christ,” and he will successfully influence his hearers to the eternal salvation of their souls.

It is unnecessary to say more on the style of the Sacred Volume : we have proved, that in its pages only is God glorified as he ought to be, and man instructed as to what he is in his own nature ; and that both is done with a majesty, consistency, and simplicity worthy of the subject.

It remains for us, in the next chapter, to give a still further proof of the authenticity of the Old Testament, drawn from the archives or records of Israel.

CHAPTER XX.

AN ARGUMENT FOR THE TRUTH OF SACRED
HISTORY, DRAWN FROM THE ARCHIVES OF
ISRAEL.

I MEAN, by the archives of Israel, those public writings which the sacred authors so frequently mention, or allude to, in various parts of holy writ. It was the custom of the world, in ancient days, to preserve the remembrance of celebrated achievements by poetry; and the Jews, there is no doubt, had their records of this sort, as well as their registers of public events, entirely independent of what I may not improperly call their Ecclesiastical history, as comprised in the relations of the Old Testament, in which we shall frequently find references to the latter, as well as in some instances to the former.

Moses, in the Book of Numbers, cites one of them, saying, "Wherefore, they that speak in proverbs, say, Come into Heshbon. Let the city of Sion be built and prepared *." In another place

* Num. xxi. 27.

Moses alludes to the "Book of the Wars of the Lord*." And when Joshua relates, that the sun stood still on Gideon, he adds, "is not this written in the Book of Jasher;" and he not only names but quotes the book in these words: "So the Sun stood still, and hasted not to go down a whole day†." In the Second Book of Samuel‡ we find the Book of Jasher again referred to. All this makes our assertions clear, that the Jews had their histories of remarkable occurrences and poetic relations, exclusive of the Bible, though in complete agreement with it; for, without doubt, the Book of Jasher was a register of public events, and the other alluded to poetic relations. Indeed, the Book of Jasher is stated by Josephus to have been a record, as above, which was written by the scribes, and deposited in the archives of the temple.

As to the sacred authors we must remember that their writings only contain the history of passing events, as far as they were in connection with God and his providence, together with the revelation of his will to man. When they speak of historical facts, we find the holy penman referring to the public records, not only as a confirmation of the circumstance of which they may be giving an

* Num. xxi. 14.

† Josh. x. 13.

‡ 2 Sam. i. 18.

account, but as an enlargement of their recital. By admitting this, we strengthen the proofs in favour of holy writ, rather than weaken them; for these historical records carry as much weight in the support of it as those living witnesses of the facts, the Jews themselves.

It frequently occurs that, in the Book of Kings, the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel is referred to, and reference is also made to the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah. In Second Chronicles we find this remarkable passage also: "Now the acts of Rehoboam, *first and last*, are they not written in the Book of Shemaiah the prophet, and of Iddo the seer, *concerning genealogies?*"* One perceives by the last two words in this quotation, that neither of these books were written under the peculiar direction of the Holy Spirit; for this expression clearly demonstrates, that they were not composed in relation to, or in connection with, the Divine will, as the sacred Chronicles and the two Books of Kings were, but merely as a register of events. We must not be led to imagine, as some have done, without considering the subject, that when the sacred writers speak of, and refer to, the Book of Kings, and the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel and Judah, that they mean the Books, which bear those names in the Sacred Volume itself. If we were to do so, we should

* 2 Chron. xii. 15.

admit many inconsistencies into it ; whereas, by allowing the contrary, for which we have every rational proof, we are removing every obstacle that the infidel can raise, and adding another ray to the clearness of the whole.

In Chronicles we find the following evidence of the truth of our observation : “ The rest of the acts of Abijah and his ways, and his sayings, are written in the story of the prophet Iddo*.” We search in the Books of Kings, and we find no such accounts there : it necessarily follows, that these things were contained in some other book, not included in holy writ—namely, the Book of the Prophet Iddo. Thus, again, it is said in the same Book of Chronicles, “ The acts of Asa, first and last, lo, they are written in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel†.” Now, as it is incontestible that the history of Asa is given more fully in the sacred Chronicles than in Kings: *these acts, first and last*, must necessarily have been written elsewhere. We will give one more example: “ Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, first and last, behold they are written in the Book of Jehu, the son of Hanani, who is mentioned in the Book of the Kings of Israel‡.” As Chronicles contain a much fuller account of Jehoshaphat than Kings, it is very clear that *the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat* were written elsewhere also. Thus

* 2 Chron. xiii. 22. † 2 Chron. xvi. 11. ‡ 2 Chron. xx. 34

by the testimony of the Bible itself, we prove that there were other histories and chronicles of events besides those in holy writ, which contained many circumstances and facts not recorded there.

Those who are desirous of being fully convinced on this point, should take the pains to compare the xiiith and xivth chapters of the Second Book of Kings with the xxivth and xxvth chapters of the Second Book of Chronicles; and they will clearly see that those titles allude to other books which have no connection with holy writ, except that many of its passages, if such proofs were necessary, must have received full confirmation from them: for it is not to be believed, that, as such full relations as *all the acts* of their kings, first and last, were constantly recorded and preserved by the Jewish people, at the same time they suffered the circulation of falsehoods by the sacred historians, when a reference to their registers of events would so easily have refuted them.

The proofs, that such histories did exist independent of holy writ, are innumerable in the Sacred Volume. In another place in Second Chronicles we find, "Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, first and last, did Isaiah the Prophet, the son of Amos, write*." As we find nothing in the writings of this prophet relating to that king, doubtless this

* 2 Chron. xxvi. 22.

history composed by him must have been contained in some other book which had no connection with the revealed word of God.

In the Proverbs of Solomon we find this remarkable passage,—“These are the Proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah, copied out*.” From this circumstance, some of our learned commentators have considered, that these Proverbs were selected from among many others. This neither adds to nor takes from their truth: the very nature of them is a confirmation of their authenticity. But if it is so, the fact serves to confirm to us that the archives of Israel contained many valuable records, all in themselves proofs of the truth of the Bible.

Surely, the many proofs assembled in this small volume must have weight enough to crush the whole fabric of infidelity. For one moment let us call them to our recollection. We have demonstrated that the history was written when the chief of the events recorded took place, immediately under the eye of the historian, and that the most remarkable facts were witnessed by a whole nation of spectators. We have shewn the author of these relations to have possessed every requisite for an historian. We have seen the history confirmed by a multiplicity of memorials and monu-

* Prov. xxv. 1.

ments, and established by an infinity of fulfilled predictions. We have found it to be a history sustained by numberless miracles, and written with a simplicity, which carries with it the clearness of truth; and we have shewn, that the public testimony of the general records of the Jewish nation was added to these accumulated demonstrations. And, above all, we have proved, that the laws contained in, and inseparable from, this history, are, in their very nature, divine. It only remains for the unbeliever to refute our testimony by an *obstinate* and *unsupported* denial of holy writ, if such can be called a *refutation*. It is not difficult, I confess, for hardened impiety to exclaim, “*I will not believe;*” but I know that it is impossible for him to add with any truth, “and I have such testimony as will destroy your faith.” The Christian *knows* in whom he has believed; he *feels* the Bible to be the word of Divine truth; and he *desires* to meet every opposition of the infidel with the “sword of the Spirit” alone, before whose dazzling brightness, that many-headed monster, scepticism, must at last retreat with dismay.

In the next chapter we will say a few words on the order in which the books of the Old Testament are placed, which will close the subject as far as it regards that part of holy writ, which is acknowledged by the people of Israel themselves to be the inspired word of God.

CHAPTER XXI.

OF THE CANONICAL BOOKS WHICH COMPOSE
THE OLD TESTAMENT, WITH REGARD TO
THEIR ORDER AND NUMBER.

I HAVE not the slightest intention to undertake the examination of this matter as a critic : this is not necessary for the establishment of the truth of the sacred volume, which is our only object here. For this purpose, it will suffice for us to prove, that the writings of the Old Testament, in the order in which they now stand in the received translations of the Bible in use among us, were acknowledged by the Jewish nation to be the whole of the revealed Word of God, and that Malachi, with whose predictions the Old Testament concludes, is the last prophet who was admitted by that people as such.

Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, were contemporaries, and from these prophets to the coming of Christ no further books were added to the sacred volume by the Jews. Of this we have sufficient and undeniable proof, as well as that all the writings, which we admit into the Old Testament, were allowed by them to possess the weight of

Divine authority, and are to this day received by that people as the inspired word of God.

Who Malachi, this last of the Prophets, was, is left, in some measure, uncertain. Some have imagined him to have been Ezra or Nehemiah; the last of those names, signifying the consolation of God, makes it not improbable, because that of Malachi means "my angel," or messenger. Whoever he was, it is most undeniable that he was the last of the Prophets: indeed the three concluding verses of his predictions most explicitly teach us, that, from him to the coming of that Elijah, of whom he speaks, all prophecy was to cease, and no further revelation was to be expected. Thus, his last chapter may be considered as *the seal of the Old Testament*.

One is next led to inquire, who it was that arranged the books of the Old Testament in the order in which they now stand? Some attribute this to Ezra: but as holy writ gives us no information of the kind, it appears to me that this is mere matter of conjecture; to which, after all, not the slightest importance is attached, though the discussion of the subject is neither unreasonable nor improper, if not carried on in a spirit of cavil and unbelief. Some people have imagined, that all the books of the Old Testament, the histories of the Jews, as well as the prophecies, are only extracts from the public records, to which we alluded

in the preceding chapter; and they add to these surmises, that this abridgment was made in the time of Ezra, by him or some other learned rabbi. I confess I have never discovered one argument which can in the slightest degree support this conjecture, and I see no probability of its correctness.

We have no reason to imagine, that the public registers consisted of any thing more than a simple recital of the most considerable facts of history as regarded the state, without any particular reference to religion. Under this supposition, we cannot allow that these annals contained reflections, exhortations, censures, and predictions, such as Moses and the Prophets abound with. Of this, the proof is in the Bible itself, and it is most satisfactory and clear; for there these records are only occasionally referred to on the statement of some fact of history, as being the document in which an enlargement of the relation was contained, sacred history giving us no more than such information as was necessary to bring in view the fulfilment of God's promises or the execution of his judgments.

The civil history of the state, as contained in its public records, could necessarily have been accessible to but a few persons; and must only have been referred to on particular occasions, and on subjects which did not interest the generality of

the people. But sacred history was the concern of all, and was to be accessible to every one. The Law of Moses was to be known to the whole nation, as we find it commanded in Deuteronomy : “ And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart : and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates *.”

The Prophets too required, that all people should know the Lord. Thus we see that religion was to be within the reach of the whole nation. The word of God was too valuable to be confined within the records of the state : that, which they were diligently to teach their children, was to be within the reach of every parent. Those predictions, on which they were to place implicit reliance, were to be ready for the examination of all. Those threatenings, those exhortations which were addressed to all, all might be acquainted with ; all could profit by them, if they would.

Again ; we have every reason to believe, that

* Deut. vi. 6 — 9.

the public records were all lost and destroyed in the total ruin of Jerusalem, and the demolition of the temple, at the commencement of the Babylonish captivity. How can we imagine, in fact, any other? For it is impossible to suppose, that, in an hour of such terror and dismay, these voluminous recitals could have been removed and taken care of by the captives of Israel; it is much more easy to conclude that they perished in the general devastation.

Then how, if the Bible be only an abridgment of the public records, and if this abridgment was made by Ezra, how is it that Daniel, who wrote before Ezra, speaks of the Law and the Prophets, and especially of Jeremiah?

Where can be the good of seeking these circuitous paths, of attempting these underminings of the truth, with the shadow of plausible objections attached to them? for that is what in reality they are. Nothing can be more lamentable than such a spirit of discussion. How frequently does it happen that we find people, while they employ themselves in this way, overlooking all the spirituality of Scripture! But we will leave all this useless reasoning, and follow only plain sense in our present discussions. Now, we may easily suppose, that many persons in the Jewish nation loved and served God, and revered his word, in the midst of all the idolatries and disobedience of

this people. Indeed, we know by Scripture itself, that this was the case at all times ; for were there not seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal ? Such as these would naturally be anxious to possess themselves of copies of the law and histories of Moses, and the other sacred penmen, together with the writings of the Prophets. Many reasons would engage the faithful Israelites in this wish : whether for the purposes of conversion, or for the preservation of the proofs of the mighty acts of Jehovah in their favour, these would necessarily be collected, and kept with the utmost care, and would be religiously guarded by the pious followers of Jehovah, in the most troublous times. Besides which, we may add our conviction, that it would please God, by his providence, to preserve those oracles of his will, which he had condescended to give to men.

We can easily imagine, with what eagerness such inestimable treasures would be sought after, and perused in the midst of the affliction of their captivity, even by those who had before disregarded them. And we can suppose the care with which they would be collected and arranged at such a time. It is quite certain, that all those books contained in our Bible, were in possession of the Jewish nation during the captivity; and it is probable that the three Prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, contributed more to the

arrangement of the whole than Ezra. But this is not material, nor is it of any consequence to discuss the variations which we discover between the Hebrew Scriptures and the Greek version of them, with regard to the order in which they are placed. This dissimilarity probably has its origin in the Greek translation having been made from some other Hebrew copy of these books which was differently arranged : but this does not in the slightest degree weaken the Divine origin of any one of its pages.

We will here say a few words on another subject, upon which impiety frequently has attempted to raise a cavil. Though we assert that the Bible is true ; though on its sacred pages we place all our hopes of salvation ; though we declare it to be, both in matter and manner, worthy of that God, the revelation of whose will to men we acknowledge it to be ; yet we say that it does not necessarily follow that the transcribers of this holy book have never made the slightest mistake in a single *letter* or *point*. We certainly find very few places in Scripture where we have reason to suppose that such has been the case : but in two or three instances we must admit, that a circumstance of the kind has occurred ; and I do not see that this admission has any effect in disturbing the truth of the whole. We might as well assert, that the use of a wrong letter, or word, by any printer of our day, is to

impeach the veracity of an author of otherwise unshaken credit.

In the Second Book of Samuel we find this passage : “ And it came to pass, after forty years, that Absalom said unto the king, I pray thee let me go, and pay my vow which I have vowed unto the Lord in Hebron *.” These, *forty* years, have much perplexed interpreters and commentators, as King David reigned altogether no more than forty years ; and unquestionably the revolt of Absalom, which began at the time of this application, did not take place in the last year of King David’s reign. We get over this difficulty, without injuring the truth in any degree, by supposing that the transcriber intended to write *four* instead of *forty*, which exactly agrees with the account in Josephus. In Second Chronicles †, we are told that Ahaziah, king of Judah, was forty-two years old when he began to reign. Just before that passage we had been informed that his father Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he began to reign, and that he reigned eight years ‡. According to this, the son would appear to have been two years older than the father. Can we for a moment doubt, that the copier has fallen into an error here ? To throw light on this passage, we must turn to the Second Book of Kings ; in which it is said, that

* 2 Sam. xv. 7. † 2 Chron. xxii. 2. ‡ 2 Chron. xxi.

Abaziah was twenty-two years old when he began to reign *. This account, in every other respect, answering to that of Chronicles, makes it clear that an error in the transcriber is the true explanation of this difficulty. Instead of cavilling at such inconsiderable circumstances, it would become us to admire the gracious providence of God in the preservation of the Sacred Volume, so pure and so consistent in every part through so many ages. And we ought to consider this of itself as a mighty proof, that in it he has been pleased to teach us his will, by the influence of his Holy Spirit on the minds of its authors.

But, to return to the particular subject of this chapter, from what has been said, I think the reader will have no difficulty in admitting that the Books of the Old Testament were all collected and arranged in their present order, at the time of the return of the Jewish nation from the Babylonish captivity: and whoever was the author of this arrangement, they cannot but allow that the Books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos,

* 2 Kings viii. 26.

Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, are the only writings which have been acknowledged by that nation to be the inspired word of God. And this acknowledgment on the part of the Jews, was not because they did not possess the works of other authors, and had not their men of learning and talent. The Apocryphal writings teach us, that many correct histories, and beautiful moral treatises, were in circulation among this people. But we have it indisputably proved to us, that they admitted none to the privilege of Divine inspiration, except those to which we attach that high distinction.

Before we take leave of our subject, as far as concerns that part of holy writ, which we distinguish by the appellation of the Old Testament, let us once more address our readers in the language of entreaty; let us again persuade them to weigh well our proofs; to consider with attention our arguments, in the spirit of anxious inquiry; to accompany this consideration with a lifting up of the heart to Him who "is always more ready to hear than we to pray." If, when they have so done, they will turn from this small volume to the sacred book itself, and in the same spirit "read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest," I feel assured that the full brightness of Divine truth will be no longer hid from their minds, and that the clouds

which prejudice may have raised around their understandings, will vanish before the power of God's word, as the morning mist gives way to the splendid beams of the meridian sun; while they will not hesitate to acknowledge with the Psalmist, that it is the Lord, who "made known his ways unto Moses, and his acts unto the children of Israel *." And I earnestly pray that the blessing of Almighty God may rest on these pages, so that all who begin to peruse them in a doubting or unbelieving spirit, may, before they arrive at their conclusion, not only be brought to a conviction of the truth of revelation, but that they may joyfully exclaim still further with David, "PRAISE YE THE LORD. GREAT IS OUR LORD, AND OF GREAT POWER, AND HIS UNDERSTANDING IS INFINITE †."

* Psalm ciii. 7.

† Psalm cxlvii. 1, 5.

PART II.


ON THE TRUTH AND INSPIRATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

CHAPTER I.

A CONCISE EXAMINATION OF THE PREJUDICES OF THE JEWS AGAINST THE GOSPEL.

·WE have, in the first part of this work, proved the truth and Divine inspiration of the Old Testament, in opposition to the arguments of the Atheist, and in complete refutation of all the other enemies of revelation.

We now undertake as clearly to establish the truth and holy authority of the New Testament, in contradiction, not only, to the assertions of the infidel, but of the Jews themselves. It is not my intention here to enter into the objections, which the Jews may have raised as to the Person of Christ. Discussions on that subject would lead us into far greater length than our present



limits would allow. Our question *now* is, as to *the truth* and *Divine authority* of the Gospel; and to the consideration of that alone I shall confine myself.

My first argument will come, with all the weight and clearness of an actual demonstration, in opposition to the prejudices of the Jews. Let any candid descendant of Abraham read our proofs in favour of the Old Testament. Strong and convincing as they are on this point, every argument acquires double force, when applied to the confirmation of the religion of Jesus: those very demonstrations, which securely establish the Law and the Prophets, render the Gospel immoveable as a rock. If the Jew should be tempted to call our arguments weak, in support of the Christian religion, let him consider what they must be in regard to the Mosaic dispensation: let him remember, that, with the same weapon, with which he would endeavour to pull down the fabric of Christianity, he is laying in utter ruins, even to its very foundation, that covenant which God made with his forefathers.

Let the subject be what it will, we must admit the same principles of reasoning into our arguments: we cannot beat down with one hand and build up with the other; we cannot argue on certain rules in favour of the Old Testament, and refuse to the proofs in favour of the New, the

benefit of similar conclusions. We will suppose that a piously disposed Jew, who, unhappily, through the prejudices of his nation, which he has imbibed from his parents, and the instructors of his youth, rejects the promised Messiah in the person of Jesus Christ: we will imagine such an one reading our first part of this volume on the truth of that Book, which he has been taught to revere as the word of God: we will suppose him rejoicing over the proofs which we have brought forward to demonstrate the Divine origin of the Law and the Prophets, in opposition to every argument of infidelity: when he has done this, we must further admit him to be led by curiosity, or by some other motive, to the examination of this, our second part; and as he proceeds, discovering that the *establishment of the Law, is the building up of the Gospel*; that every demonstration which we have advanced in favour of the Old Testament, produces *two* in support of the New. What will such a man do? Will he reject the Bible, because its very proofs establish the Gospel with certainty? or will he embrace the Gospel because he sees, that by refusing it he also refuses every argument which proves the authenticity of that Revelation which he acknowledges as the word of Jehovah?

If this man be, according to our supposition,

really pious, it follows that he will not suffer any thing to wrest from him those oracles of Divine truth delivered to him by his forefathers ; and if he be *only reasonable*, it also follows, that the same mode of argument will be admitted by him as right ; whether the subject be for or against his received notions. From these two principles it necessarily would come to pass, that such a man would be convinced of the truth of Christianity on a *fair* examination of its proofs.

Such an assemblage of demonstration, as the Gospel displays, could not be resisted by the really inquiring mind, whether Jew or Infidel. The prejudiced, the wilfully blind, and the careless, are those from whom alone the truths of Revelation, whether of the Old or New Testament, are concealed ; and by no other than such as those are they rejected and denied.

The Prophets spoke of many things which would happen to the Messiah : all these predictions have been entirely verified in the person of Christ. Let us read attentively the liiid chapter of Isaiah, and compare only that one small portion of Scripture, with the history of our Lord, as given by the Evangelists ; we shall find in it a weight of evidence in favour of the Gospel, which resists all opposition, and far over-balances every objection. To Abraham that promise was given,


that in his Seed should all nations of the earth be blessed * ; and where shall we find its fulfilment but in the person of that Jesus, who directed his disciples to “ preach the Gospel to every creature ? † ” When before the coming of Christ did the gentile world, the people who sat in darkness, see any light ?

Let us turn again to the Prophet Isaiah, and examine the beautiful invitation contained in his lvth chapter : who was the author of this invitation, but He who said, “ Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out ? ‡ ” Excellent as many passages are in the writings of Moses, they contain nothing equal to this promise of Jesus, in which the invitation of the prophet is expressly confirmed. Instead of the heathen nations being invited to partake of holiness with the Jews ; instead of their being exhorted to conversion and newness of life, by the instructions of their lawgiver, the Israelites were utterly to destroy them : and, alas ! we know that when they were not actually destroyed, they did not always receive the benefit of pious example from the chosen people of God ; but much more frequently, in gross disobedience of the command of Jehovah himself, the Israelites shut out the light of Divine truth from these Pagans, by joining them in their abominations.

* Gen. xxii. 18. † Mark xvi. 15. ‡ John vi. 37.

Though strangers were not actually refused a participation in the covenant of works ; yet, we have shewn before, that the religion of Moses was intended only for the Jews. It was the religion of Christ which invited *all* to come : it was the Christian covenant which admitted the Gentile to the same privileges as the Jew. The Jewish nation had an high priest exclusively to themselves : Jesus is the High Priest for the whole world ; and through him all may “ have life.” Every thing in the covenant of works bore allusion to the deliverance which the Almighty had wrought for the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, and their final possession of the land of Canaan : every circumstance of the covenant of grace has reference to the victory accomplished by the Messiah over sin, and the power of death, and to the believer’s certain entrance into the heavenly Canaan.

The Jewish nation, we have before said, was a type of the whole world. In that people were mystically represented all the true people of God : to them alone the covenant of works was confined ; to the whole race of mankind in general, the covenant of grace is open. The Jews readily admit that many of the prophecies of the Old Testament do contain allusions to such a covenant. Since this is the case, and since it is Jesus Christ, who has made known the true God to the Gentile world ; since in him all the prophecies are fulfilled respecting the Messiah, from that Seed, foretold in



Genesis, which was to bruise the head of the serpent, to that "Sun of Righteousness with healing on his wings," predicted in Malachi*, let us entreat in the language of affectionate persuasion our elder brother, the descendant of Abraham, of Isaac, and Jacob, to take a share in the inheritance of these blessed promises, and to examine attentively, whether this Jesus whom he rejects is not that Messiah, whom he with aching eyes has been watching for through so many centuries, expecting him in mercy; when, alas! all who have been brought into his marvellous light know that he will only come again to pronounce judgment upon those unhappy Israelites who deny him, together with all others who refuse that salvation which he has prepared for the real people of God. I exhort my Jewish brethren seriously to consider, whether the spreading of Christianity among the Gentile nations, while they obstinately reject it, is not a fulfilment of the words in Isaiah,—“I am sought of them that asked not for me: I am found of them that sought me not. I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name†.” And whether it also is not an accomplishment of those emphatic words,—“I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh


* Mal. iv. 2.

† Isai. lxx. 1, &c.

in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts, a people that provoked me to anger continually to my face."

Let not prejudice hinder any one among the sons of Abraham from a fair investigation of the Gospel: let them seek, in Moses, in the Psalms, and in the Prophets, for such proofs as they contain; and then let us see whether they can still reject Christianity? I feel assured, if this is fairly done, if they will seek in prayer the help of the God of their fathers in the elucidation of truth, that they will come to a blessed conclusion. Their doubts respecting Christ will vanish; and they will look on him whom their fathers have pierced, desiring even to be counted worthy to suffer for his Name.

Lest an objection to Christianity should be raised because of its rejection by the governors and heads of the people in Judea, I say, be it remembered, that, at the time of the crucifixion of our Lord, the Sadducees had great authority in the government: the high-priests, Annas and Caiaphas, were of that sect. It was not at all surprising then, that Jesus, who spoke with contempt of this world and all its possessions, who preached self-denial, and the service of God in spirit and in truth; who taught that afflictions and the patient endurance of evil were inseparable from true religion; who instructed his followers



that they had “no continuing city*” here, but that his true disciples must look for a dwelling “not made with hands, eternal in the heavens†;” it was not, I repeat, at all surprising, that He who inspired his Apostles with a doctrine so contrary to that of these Sadducees, whose first principle was to deny any resurrection, should be mocked and reviled by them. Again, is it to be wondered at, that he was hated and rejected by the proud Pharisees, whose hypocrisies he exposed? The Jew may with justice scandalize many of the professing members of the Christian church, who, like the Pharisees of old, neglect the “weightier matters of the law‡;” he may blame the followers of the peaceful Jesus for their divisions among themselves; for the contempt which is shewn to true piety and holiness by many who name the name of Christ; he may behold with disgust their worldly-mindedness; he may cry shame on their disregard of their Sabbath. All this we most readily admit; and we are not intending in the slightest degree to offer any justification for such characters; God forbid that we should: but we say, that nothing can fairly be alleged against Christianity in consequence of the lives of some of its professors. It would be quite as reasonable to say, that there is not a word of

* Heb. xiii. 14.

† 2 Cor. v. 1.

‡ Matt. xxiii. 23.

truth in the Old Testament, because some wicked and disobedient Israelites rebelled against God. What disorders and idolatries were they not guilty of time after time, even while the denunciations of the Prophets sounded in their ears! What would the Jews reply, were we to draw inferences against the Law of Moses in consequence of the conduct of some of its professors even at this day? Let them be careful, then, how they attack the Gospel on the ground of the vices of some followers, as they are called, of Christianity. To be able to draw fair conclusions respecting any religion from the lives of its professors, it is necessary first to examine the rules of that religion, and then see how far they act according to them.

The Jews make an objection to our belief of the Trinity: and most unjust it is; since the Christian acknowledges *one only God*; since the true worshiper of Jesus sincerely joins with the follower of Moses, in charging those with idolatry who adore a plurality of gods. Why should it be strange that in this unity we admit Three Persons, without pretending to comprehend or explain that mystery, when they allow of the same association in the *name* of their God? Is it that they will admit the name of God to be more incomprehensible than his essence? Is this the reason, that he who worships Three Persons in one only adorable God is more of an idolater than he who worships

the Triune Jehovah, though he does not in so many words distinctly name Father, Son, and Holy Ghost?

The Jew cannot, with any degree of fairness or appearance of reason, make objections to the mystery of the incarnation, since the union of the Godhead with human nature does not imply any contradiction, and is not impossible: besides, many of the Prophecies very fully predict this. The Deliverer we are first taught is to be the seed of *the woman**; and after many other prophecies respecting Him, Isaiah tells us that he shall be called "Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace†." Can any one reject the force of evidence in favour of the incarnation which these two prophecies contain? The seed of the woman, He who is to be born of a daughter of Eve, is to be called, the mighty God, the everlasting Father; He is to bruise the serpent's *head*. It appears to me, that this is saying at once, *our God* shall release man from those chains which he has bound himself with by his disobedience, and he will do it in his own wonderful manner.

These two mysteries then, of the Trinity and the Incarnation, being no just obstacles to the reception of the Gospel; the books of the New Testa-

* Gen. iii. 15.

† Isai. ix. 6.

ment having as many arguments in their favour as the Old; and every one of them, when applied to the writings of the Apostles, acquiring double force; to acknowledge the truth of the one, while we deny the authenticity of the other, appears to me to be holding the balance unequally; which every principle of natural equity condemns, and which the law of Moses positively forbids.

Having thus attacked the most considerable prejudices of the Jews, we must, in the next chapter, begin an enumeration of our proofs in favour of the Gospel.



CHAPTER II.

ON THE EXCELLENCY OF THE CHRISTIAN
RELIGION.

ONE of the most considerable proofs, in favour of the inspiration of the sacred authors, consists in the essential qualities of that religion which they have taught to mankind. If we allow that there is nothing more indispensable and better founded than the duty of a reasonable being towards his Creator, we must admit that duty to be the proper occupation of this life: we must acknowledge that our whole conduct should be guided by its rules; and we cannot do other than believe, that religion to be true which teaches us to worship the God of all power in a manner suited to his majesty.

We have already proved that Moses was the only author of antiquity who knew God as the Creator of all things, and who taught men just ideas of His Providence and of the worship due to Him: and it has been admitted, that Moses excelled all other men in the nature of the religion which he produced; that his was a service worthy

of God, and fit for man. From these circumstances we have drawn strong arguments in favour of his mission: let us see how this reasoning applies itself to the Gospel of Christ.

If we allow the truth of the writings of the Old Testament because of their superiority over all others, what shall we say, when we consider the sublimity, the excellency of the Gospel in all its parts? What shall we say, when we examine the writings of the Evangelists, the Epistles of the Apostles, and the Apocalypse of John? If the Old Testament contains a religion excellent, fit for man, and worthy of God, we must admit that the Gospel teaches a worship elevated to the highest degree of perfection to which it can attain on earth. In this argument we at once view the strength of that reasoning which, in the preceding chapter, we introduced; namely, that every proof in favour of the Old Testament carries double weight with it when applied to the New. It was agreeable to the wisdom of God, that the eternal Son should leave his Father's glory, to be for a season tabernacled in human flesh; that he should open to man a new covenant with his Maker, and teach him the way of everlasting life through himself, who is alone "the way, the truth, and the life*;" that he should by dying

* John xiv. 6.

upon the cross become the sacrifice for sin, and do away with the necessity of all other sacrifices, they having been instituted only as types and forebadows of himself. The Jews cannot, therefore, we repeat, make any reasonable objection against Christianity, on the ground that these ceremonies under the Law were commanded by God. We know that they were; but they were nothing in themselves: they were only commanded for an especial purpose; which purpose being completed in the death of our Lord, they are now as useless and unmeaning as the sacrifices of the heathen world.

In Jesus Christ, we have before said, is the fulfilment of that prediction of Moses,—“The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken*.”

Is it not also the same Jesus of whom Moses, in the 19th verse of this chapter, says, “And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, *I will require it of him?*”

Remember, O Israel! that it is our God, that it is *thy* God, who says, “*I will require it of him.*”

If the Jews, whose spiritual darkness and scattered and suffering state for so many ages all true

* Deut. xviii. 15.

Christians must deplore ; if the Jews, I say, would pay strict attention to these words, “ I will require it of him ; ”—if they would consider the solemn import of them from the mouth of the Almighty ; if, kneeling upon their knees, they would read them again and again, and pray to be enlightened as to their true meaning, they would be convinced that all their calamities, their ruin and dispersion, their persecutions and sorrows, are the wonders of the Almighty in the performance of his word, requiring the crucified Jesus at their hands, whom they not only have refused to listen to, but whom their forefathers rejected and slew.

If their fathers were punished for their disobedience to Moses, and their rejection of the Prophets in ancient times, it is only reasonable to conclude, that the misfortunes which have overwhelmed this unhappy people, are brought on them not only by the sins of those who called down the blood of Jesus on the heads of their children, as well as on themselves ; but also by their own contempt for that healing which the Sun of Righteousness freely offered to all : by their refusal of this greatest of the Prophets, Jesus of Nazareth ; this chief among ten thousand ; this High-Priest for ever ; this glorious, this wonderful, everlasting God.

But, to proceed—Jesus Christ does not only content himself with purifying our ideas upon the

nature of God, and the worship due to him, but he carries the promises of the Gospel to the highest degree of clearness and excellency. Moses predicted to the Israelites a peaceful possession of the land of Canaan, after a warfare with the inhabitants of the country: Jesus raises the veil, and teaches us the spirituality of the Jewish history, as well as that of their religion: He establishes the certain hope of a peaceful eternity in the heavenly Canaan, after a warfare with principalities and powers; with flesh and blood, and the dominion of Satan.

Our blessed Lord proves to the Sadducees the resurrection, from those words, "I am the God of Abraham, &c.*:" in reality, they are not stronger there than in the writings of Moses†; they are in fact the same; but it was their application which astonished the hearers of Jesus, and his arguments were themselves the most powerful demonstration in support of the Divine origin of the Gospel, as well as a convincing proof of the certainty of the resurrection. Behold how the promises of eternal life, and the declaration of the last judgment, were drawn by Christ from the obscurity of the Mosaic dispensation: if we had not one single other proof, is not this of itself sufficient to establish the Divine origin of the

* Matt. xxii. 32.

† Exod. iii. 16.

Gospel? Is it not enough to demonstrate to us, that He who knew the secrets of the Most High, was himself "God manifest in the flesh *."

The Jews admit these articles of faith into their creed: they allow of a general resurrection and a final judgment: but they must confess, if they speak candidly, that they receive them under a veil of obscurity, which Christ alone has raised; that, enveloped as they are with mystery in the pages of the Old Testament, in the New they have obtained all the clearness which we can desire. Of course they cannot come to this conclusion, while they refuse to *read* the Gospel; but if they would only examine its pages, with an humble reliance on their *own God*, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, for the teaching of his Spirit, I know that they would not long be able to resist the power of his word in the writings of the Evangelists: they would not be able to deny to our Lord the glorious prerogative of having in the Divine Wisdom of the Godhead, given the promises of the Old Testament as much more weight and efficacy, as it has pleased him to bestow on them more clearness and certainty. It needs no argument to convince us, that without the hope of another life, religion would be vain; that it would be imperfect, if not altogether use-

* 1 Tim. iii. 16.

less. St. Paul expresses himself very distinctly on this point : he says, “ And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most miserable*.”

Wherefore does the Apostle use such powerful expressions ? Is it to teach us, that the soul is not capable of happiness, when separated from the body by death ? Is it to shew us, that there is no enjoyment for our spiritual nature, when released from its prison of clay ? He says not a syllable of the kind : on the contrary, he very distinctly assures us in another place, that such is not the case ; for he says, “ But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour. Yet what I shall choose I wot not ; for I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better †.” Let us then devote a few moments to the attentive examination of the Apostle’s meaning. As the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are the foundation of all the promises of the Gospel, as they are the proofs of our own resurrection after death, our faith in these promises would be entirely vain, it would be indeed an illusion, if Christ were not raised ; the great support of piety would, in this case, be broken down and destroyed, and the cause which leads to sanctifi-

* 1 Cor. xv. 17, 19.

† Phil. i. 22, 23.

cation would become altogether nugatory. But, consider the matter as it really is, and in the resurrection of Jesus we discover an unanswerable argument for the efficacy of faith, and a clear demonstration of the power of God. The hope of a blessed eternity may be considered as oil to the lamp of the Christian ; it feeds the flame of true piety ; and it lights the believer in his course through the vale of darkness in which, while in the flesh, he is called on to tread. Religion, we know, does not promise the enjoyment of this life to her votaries. She neither holds out the hope of worldly honours, riches, nor pleasures ; but she assures them, that she has a crown of glory and everlasting treasures to give. She tells them, that in her dwellings “ are pleasures for evermore *.”

We see that in this life she frequently brings on her advocates contempt, hatred, persecution, and sorrow : she calls on them for patience and long-suffering, and for entire resignation to the will of the Almighty, under every dispensation. Thus we see, that the joys of the faithful believer derive their origin from the hope of a glorious eternity : they take not their rise in the things of time ; they flee not away with the possessions of this life ; they are from everlasting to everlasting ; they began in the promises of Jehovah, and they will

* Psalm xvi. 11.

have their fruition in the fulfilment of his word in endless glory. Religion neither prevents the casualties nor the afflictions of life : but it teaches us to bear them with submission ; and it leads us to a hope beyond the grave. It does not tell us, that our heavenly Father will not suffer us to be afflicted : on the contrary, our Lord expressly tells his disciples, that they would be called on to endure much persecution. From this we should remember, that it is both presumptuous and unjust to weigh the uprightness or dishonesty of a man by the prosperity or adversity of his life. The sun-shine and the rain are, we know, distributed alike on the lands of the good and of the wicked. We are expressly told, that afflictions are destined to the people of Christ, to lead them to “ a far more exceeding weight of glory.” The believer is called not to wear his crown here, but to take up his cross and follow his crucified Master. It is then the knowledge of the promises of that God who gives us eternal life through his Son, which makes religion of infinite and incomparable value. Since Jesus was the interpreter of these glorious promises, in that he drew them from the obscurity of the Law and the Prophets, and “ brought life and immortality to light *,” it must readily be allowed that he has penetrated

* 2 Tim. i. 10.

into the mysteries of the Mosaic dispensation; that he has extended and spiritualized the writings of the Old Testament; and consequently that the Spirit of Almighty Wisdom was manifested in him in a manner which declared him to be the Son of God. Surely this is alone sufficient to establish the Divine authority of the whole Gospel. But, let us proceed a little further.

The universal judgment is among those articles of faith which Jesus has placed before us in the brightness of Divine light. This doctrine is so clearly conformed to the wisdom of God, whose infinite plans are generally incomprehensible to our finite minds, that it cannot do other than give to religion a perfection in which we acknowledge at once the Divine excellency of its Author. Thus we are brought to confess, that, if the doctrines contained in the writings of Moses are of a character truly Divine, it is demonstrated beyond all contradiction, that the doctrines promulgated in the Gospel are also of celestial growth. If we admit that Moses has written what the reason of man could not have invented; we are compelled to allow, that Jesus has taught what the mind of man cannot sufficiently admire.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE HOLINESS OF THOSE PRECEPTS WHICH ARE CONTAINED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

WE have before admitted, that the Moral Laws of Moses were the wisest of all laws: we have proved that they were published in a Divine and wonderful manner; and we have demonstrated that the holiness which they teach fully corresponds with their celestial origin. All this I consider as having been satisfactorily established in the first part of this volume. If then we have acknowledged these three things, and if the precepts of the Gospel have increased the holiness of these Laws; if they have added to their perfection; if Divine wisdom has shone with more brightness from the commands of Christ than from those of Moses; surely it is but just to conclude, that these Laws were derived from as high and pure a source as those of the Old Testament, and that their Author and Promulgator was far above the Lawgiver of the Israelites. That the Laws of Moses were capable of improvement, the precepts of the Gospel have shewn us: but who shall be

able to carry to higher perfection the commands of the holy Jesus? St. Matthew tell us, that "he taught them as one having *authority*, and not as the Scribes and Pharisees *." This implies him to have been commanding an extension of the Mosaic Law by his *own* power; to have been instructing the people by his *own* knowledge; for we know that the Scribes and Pharisees possessed what would be commonly called *authority*.

A few examples will suffice to prove that undeniable superiority which even his mode of teaching displayed; that right which he assumed, as inherently belonging to his glorious and Divine nature, to add to and explain the Law of Moses. For instance: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But *I say unto you*, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you†." It is hardly necessary to give any more examples, for this at once proves both the authority of the Teacher and the superiority of his doctrine; but we will proceed a little further. When our Lord was asked, how many times an offending brother should be pardoned; he replied, "Not until seven times, but until seventy times seven;" thus em-

* Matt. vii. 29.

† Matt. v. 43, 44.

phatically extending, or rather adding, to the Law of Moses. But to shew his veneration for the Law itself, and at the same time to convince people what his real intentions were, we are told in another place, that he said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law and the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil*." If we examine the Epistles of the Apostles, we discover a holiness in them also far beyond the precepts of Moses; a holiness which is, we can easily perceive, derived from their Divine Master; which was poured into their hearts by the Holy Spirit. For instance, St. Paul says, "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good†." What a beautiful and heavenly description is that of charity, in St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians! "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not;

* Matt. v. 17.

† Rom. xii. 17, &c.

charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil ; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth ; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth : but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail ; whether there be tongues, they shall cease ; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away *."

The charity of the Gospel enlarges every virtue, and leads us to sympathise in whatever affects our fellow-creatures ; it engages us to " Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep †." This is the charity of the religion of Jesus. And in what other volume, except the New Testament, shall we find such a description of charity ? Who but the disciples of our Lord have given us such a heavenly picture of this grace ? Can we in Moses or the Prophets, or any other part of the Old Testament, discover any thing which bears a comparison to it ?

Christ himself tells us, " This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends ‡." Our Lord not only gave this commandment, but he set

* 1 Cor. xiii. 4—8.

† Rom. xii. 15.

‡ John xv. 12, &c.

us the example, by willingly laying down his own life; not indeed for his friends, but for those who were by nature his bitter enemies.

The Law of Moses, it is true, commanded the Israelites to love their neighbours as themselves; but the precepts of Jesus teach us, that all mankind are to be considered as our neighbours whenever they stand in need of our kindness.

The more we study the Gospel, the more we examine the purity and holiness of its instructions, the more we read the lessons of universal benevolence, with which it abounds, so much the more shall we be filled with wonder and admiration; and so much the more readily shall we allow of its Divine origin, and give to God alone the glory of so beautiful a composition.

Moses permitted the Jews to defend and pursue their rights: Jesus commands us to suffer injury, rather than to attempt to recover by violence. In this the pre-eminence of the Gospel over the writings of Moses, completely discovers itself again. And where shall we find, either in Moses or the Prophets, precepts equal to the following: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is,

there will your heart be also *.”—“ No man can serve two masters : for either he will hate the one, and love the other ; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon †.” That is to say, we cannot seek the kingdom of heaven, and follow the world ; we cannot love God, and be also lovers of pleasure. “ Seek ye FIRST the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you ‡.” Though the Christian religion condemns the eagerly following any pursuit in preference to that of holiness, yet it does not encourage idleness ; for St. Paul expressly says, “ If any would not work, neither should he eat §.”

We have now gone beyond our limits ; and must not extend our examples any further, or we shall carry this part of our subject to a much greater length than we intended. I feel convinced, that a sufficient number have been produced here to prove to the reader the superiority of the precepts of Christ over those of Moses, in a manner which is impossible to be refuted, even by the most determined scepticism, and the most daring impiety. And I am quite certain that every remark which I have here been led to make, will find an affirmative in the heart and the understanding of each

* Matt. vi. 19—21.

† Matt. vi. 24.

‡ Matt. vi. 33.

§ 2 Thes. iii. 10.

piously disposed reader, while the most indifferent will not be able to refuse an assent to demonstrations so clear, to arguments so convincing.

It has been proved, that Reason cannot deny her full approbation to the Law of Moses : surely it is not too much to say that she is compelled to give her highest admiration to the precepts of the Gospel.

Moses promised the Israelites a peaceful and happy life here, while they remained in obedience to God ; Jesus, on the contrary, speaks of a strait and narrow way through which the Christian must pass. The Apostle Paul tells his beloved Timothy, that “ all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution *.” And do we not see it so at this day ? He who would separate himself from the pleasures of the world, that he might seek the glories of eternity, is sure to be reviled by those who are conformed to, and wrapt up in it ; or who are, like Martha, “ cumbered about much serving †.” Whether it is *serving* their covetousness, their ambition, or their pleasures, they all equally despise and revile the meek, the faithful, the devoted follower of the Gospel ; he is in their eyes either an enthusiast, or a hypocrite, a madman, or a deceiver.

The promise of a resurrection to eternal life is

* 2 Tim. iii. 12.

† Luke x. 40.

so excellent, so glorious, that it exceeds all the praises which our lips are capable of uttering. This we have spoken of before ; but our subject leads us to descant on it still further for a short time. He who expects a celestial beatitude, values none of the advantages of this sublunary world ; he who looks for an everlasting inheritance, does not place his affections on the uncertain possessions of this life ; he who is promised an “ exceeding weight of glory ” in heaven, despises the emptiness of earthly splendour. Thus, the true Christian possesses the things of this life as if he possessed them not ; he uses them without abusing them, and is ready cheerfully to relinquish them into the hands of the Almighty Giver whenever called on so to do ; for his affections are set on things above ; his treasure is in heaven.

Does not the worldling seek with infinite pains pleasure, rank, or riches ? Should not the Christian at least as eagerly seek the “ Pearl of great price,” the riches of everlasting life ? If it be true that God has promised endless glory to those that seek the salvation prepared for them in Christ Jesus, it surely follows, that Christians ought to love God beyond every other being, that they ought to value this salvation more than all the possessions which this world can give.—Perhaps it may be asked, how are we to feel assured that we do love God ? This, I will allow, is hard to be discovered,

even by ourselves, when we are surrounded with the riches, the pleasures, and the honours of this life : but we easily know the certainty of it when the world is against us ; when poverty encompasses us, when sickness overtakes us ; when temptations assail us. When we can meet all this with patience and resignation, with endurance and fortitude, while we put a sure trust in God, and know that he will work all “ things together for good ; ” then, indeed, we find that the love of God is in our hearts. We discover it even more clearly, if possible, when we can relinquish the delights of the worldling, when we can exchange them for the pleasures of piety ; when we can forsake the friendship of the gay for the consolations of religion ; when we can desert the crowded assembly to commune with our own hearts and be still ; when we can acknowledge from the conviction of our own indwelling corruptions, the exceeding sinfulness of human nature ; when we can experimentally declare sin to be as a leprosy, clinging to our very thoughts ; when we can find no sound part within ourselves ; when we can eagerly desire to be cleansed at the fountain opened in the veins of Jesus, our Emanuel ; when we can feel that we only deserve the wrath of God, but, at the same time earnestly implore his mercy through Christ ; when we can acknowledge with the Prophet, that “ our very righteousness is as

filthy rags ;” when we can say with the Apostle, that “ when we would do good, evil is present with us ;” when we are ready to suffer for “ righteousness sake ;” when our faith and hope shine brightest as affliction increases ; when we can with humble confidence, and with child-like reliance, say, “ Not my will, but thine be done ;” while we resign our dearest earthly treasure into the hands of the Lord, whether that treasure consists of its possessions, or of beloved friends and relations. Then it is that the believer in Christ may feel assured that he really loves God, his Creator, his Redeemer, and Sanctifier.

But our blessed Lord tells us, not only to love God, but to love him with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our strength, and with all our minds*.

This is the way in which the worldling loves his pleasure ; this is the eagerness with which he pursues the riches, the vanities, the splendour on which he sets his heart. Why should not the Christian display an equal love for God ; as fervent a zeal in the attainment of everlasting life ?

As the worldling, we know, will readily risk his eternal soul for the gratification of earthly enjoyments, so ought the Christian not to hesitate to relinquish, with cheerfulness, every possession

* Luke x. 27.

of this world, whether of riches, of health, or of life itself, when called on to do so for the sake of his heavenly inheritance. These truths agree not with flesh and blood; but in their very nature they proclaim their Divine origin. When fairly examined, the profound wisdom of God must be admired in the beautiful dispensation of the Gospel. His infinite mercy so freely administered, while his awful justice is so completely satisfied, is a subject which fills the soul of the believer with a holy thankfulness beyond the power of language to express, which fills him with admiration, wonder, love, and awe; while he acknowledges with St. Paul, that "it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings *."

* Heb. ii. 10.

CHAPTER IV.

OF THE HOLY NATURE OF THAT WORSHIP,
WHICH THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION INCUL-
CATES:—ITS SUPERIORITY TO THAT TAUGHT
UNDER THE MOSAIC DISPENSATION.

WE have seen, in the first part of this treatise, that the worship of the Almighty, under the Jewish dispensation, was united with a multitude of ceremonies which frequently led its professors to be satisfied with the appearance of religion; rather than the reality, forgetting that the same God, who commanded the observance of these rites, required also the service of the heart; that it was not only the outward cleansing of the body, but the inward purification of the mind, which the God whom they worshiped enjoined.

Ceremonies and sacrifices, we have before said, had their uses under the Jewish dispensation, independent of their typical nature. They were memorials of past events, and also they were distinctions, which served to render the Jewish religion conspicuous in the eyes of the idolatrous nations, which surrounded Canaan. But their

chief value consisted in their exact application, as types of that Messiah who was to break down all distinctions between Jew and Gentile ; who was to open the gates of salvation to " all nations."

Let not the Jew then imagine, that the performance of ceremonies adds a lustre to religion. On the contrary, ceremonies prove that religion, which observes them, to be in a degree incomplete : they imply a something unseen, of which they are a type ; and if something *unseen*, then something *wanting*. Now, we do not find a single ceremony of the Jewish religion which was only a memorial, independent of a typical nature : some mystery was implied in all, as well as some circumstance commemorated. In Jesus every type was realized, every mystery explained, and the Jewish ceremonies are consequently become perfectly useless ; for even as memorials they are no longer wanted, the Messiah having in his own person become the memorial of every mercy, as well as the fulfilment of every type ; inasmuch as by his death he has procured everlasting mercy for every true Israelite, bringing them out of the Egypt of sin, into the Canaan of a heavenly inheritance.

These remarks are applicable, in some degree, to the ceremonies of the Christian religion. Few as they are, and instituted by Christ himself, though necessary and proper, and a great assistance to our finite minds, a manifest help in carry-

ing our thoughts towards the infinite Almighty Creator, yet they are nothing *in themselves*, and imply a something wanting, an inward and spiritual grace which the ceremony *cannot* impart. These ceremonies, properly used, are *means of grace*; but they are not *grace itself*.

The ceremony of Baptism is a pledge of our nominal entrance into the Christian covenant, but it does not assure us of salvation. The ceremony of the Lord's Supper is a memorial of the death of our Lord; but an outward participation in it, does not necessarily make us partakers of his resurrection. The inward and spiritual grace implied in both of these rites, *may be entirely wanting*: it is *unseen*, and is the work of the Holy Spirit alone, by whom it is given to all those who earnestly seek it, either for themselves in the holy eucharist, or for their infants, in presenting them with humble confidence in God's promises at the baptismal font.

This therefore proves, that ceremonies in themselves are nothing, and that when the reason of their institution is done away with, they should cease also. Will the Christian require either the ceremony of Baptism, or that of the Lord's Supper in the New Jerusalem? The question answers itself. I say then, that this at once proves every ceremony of the Jewish dispensation to be now utterly useless. We possess the reality, we want

not the shadow. If the Jew will still cling to the immutability of the ceremonial part of the Law of Moses, let him search in the Prophet Jeremiah, and he will find, that God himself predicted their discontinuance in those words: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: but this *shall* be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord *."—And to teach, not only the Jew, but every denomination of persons, still further the utter uselessness of ceremonies, unaccompanied by spirituality of mind, even where the ceremonies themselves are proper, let us refer to the Prophet Isaiah: "To what purpose is the multi-

* Jer. xxxi. 31—34.

tude of your sacrifices unto me ? saith the Lord : I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts ; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats *.” Again ; at the 13th verse of the same chapter, “ Bring no more vain oblations ; incense is an abomination unto me ; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with ; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.” A little further on, the Prophet teaches the people in what true religion consists : “ Wash you, make you clean ; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes ; cease to do evil ; learn to do well ; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.”

By these examples we have sufficiently shewn, that the Lord did not regard even the ceremonies of his own institution, under the Mosaic covenant, as in any degree essential in themselves. And St. Paul very plainly gives us to understand in the following words, that by the coming of Christ, all the purposes of the ceremonies of the Law were fulfilled. “ Where remission of” sins “ is, there is no more offering for sin †.”

After the crucifixion of our Lord, the Jews, we know, for a time retained their usual mode of worship in the temple at Jerusalem, till the Al-

* Isai. i. 11.

† Heb. x. 18.

mighty saw fit to destroy these husbandmen, and give their vineyard to others ; till it pleased him to permit the Roman arms to carry desolation into Judea, to destroy their city, their temple, and their worship. The fire which consumed the temple at Jerusalem, put a final stop to the observance of the most solemn ceremonies of the Law. And thus, according to those words of St. Paul, in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, at the third chapter, was the work of the Jews “ made manifest.” It is not improbable that St. Paul wrote the passage, to which I allude, in a prophetic spirit ; and that by it he foretold that terrible day on which the Lord would avenge himself on the guilty Jews, by all the horrors of the Roman war, at the end of which Jerusalem was destroyed, and the temple consumed by fire ; and then it was that the Jews, who had been converted to Christianity, were constrained to acknowledge, that all the Mosaic ceremonies were become as “ wood, hay, and stubble.”

Since then the Jews have not had it in their power, for so many ages, to practise, with their accompanying solemnity, the most venerable of their ceremonies, they should consider well the judgments of that Providence, who ordained that the temple, the altar, and the priest should cease, at the commencement of that new covenant so clearly predicted by the Prophets.

God promised in this covenant pardon of sin. Jesus announced this pardon to men; having purchased it by the shedding of his own blood; by submitting to death, the ignominious death of the cross. A participation in the benefits of this blessed gift, can alone be obtained through faith in him who is "the propitiation for our sins;" and the Gospel teaches us, that with sincere repentance, by fervent prayer, it must be sought for. When the jailor at Philippi, in self-conviction exclaimed, "What must I do to be saved?" he was answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*." Faith, the Christian's faith, has for its *object* the death of Jesus Christ as a sacrifice for sin, the Innocent suffering for the guilty; the Just for the unjust. The resurrection and ascension of our Lord are also two very principal objects of faith, as they are our *earnest* of a blessed immortality not only for our souls, but for our bodies, when they shall become like "his glorious body." The Jew acknowledges, that faith was imputed to Abraham for righteousness. Thus also the Christian is justified through faith in God's promises; for St. Paul says, "But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered

* Acts xvi. 30, 31.

for our offences, and was raised again for our justification *."

The faith of Abraham animated him to give God a ready obedience in relinquishing that, which was dearest to him ; so the faith of the true Christian will lead him to obey God in keeping his commandments, in the midst of every temptation ; and it will enable him to work out his salvation with fear and trembling, looking to Jesus as " the author and finisher of his faith." Whoever enters sincerely on a Christian course will quickly discover that a perfect obedience is above the reach of human weakness. The imperfection, which the believer perceives in his very best actions, will lead him to constant humility ; and the sin, even of his virtuous ones, will teach him the necessity of true repentance,—a repentance not to be repented of, consisting in godly sorrow for sin, and a steadfast purpose of newness of life.

One of the most pernicious errors of those, who live under the light of the Gospel, without truly partaking of its influence, is the mistaken notion of repentance which they acquire. They imagine that it consists in asking pardon of God for past offences, with perhaps a little sorrow expressed in a few hurried sentences, or a slight feeling of regret, which hardly clouds an hour of their lives.

* Rom. iv. 24, 25.

Whereas true repentance, the repentance of the Christian, is accompanied by an utter abhorrence of sin ; and a sincere love of holiness, with an earnest desire to walk in the commandments of God for the time to come, together with a deep sense of inability to do any thing pleasing to our heavenly Father. Then indeed, and only then, our regret at having broken his holy law, is "godly sorrow," which "worketh repentance*."

There is a species of repentance which has no true foundation, though it is not actual hypocrisy. In fact, the penitent himself is often the dupe of his own heart, and fancies himself sincere, when he is neither more nor less than alarmed by some awakening providence, some sudden dispensation of God's anger. This is a repentance of fear, not of love, and as evanescent as the cause which produces it. A man may be brought into this state by the approach of danger, by some great bodily suffering, or by the fear of death in any shape. When the boisterous tempest hath raged, many a voyager on the watery deep hath trembled, and while the raging billows have threatened him with an instant grave, hath cried in his soul's agony to God for help and pardon. In the hour of sickness and apparently approaching death, what resolutions have been made of amendment, what

* 2 Cor. vii. 10.

determinations of newness of life! In either case, as the danger has passed away, so also have the prayers and the promises been almost as frequently forgotten.

The Psalmist describes this repentance exactly, in the following words:—"When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and inquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their Rock, and the high God their Redeemer. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant *."

Repentance then, to deserve the name of *true* repentance, to be such as is required by our God, must have two very distinguishing characteristics. The one is, that it must be the effect of our hatred of sin; the other that we must renounce that sin entirely, of which, in *self-conviction*, we repent. We must altogether relinquish it, we must abandon it for ever, even though it be as dear to us as a right hand or a right eye. The true penitent waits not until his sins leave him, till he has no inclination to pursue them, but he resolutely quits them, and gives the only sincere proof of repentance in newness of life and holiness of conduct. He must evince by all his actions, that love for, not

* Psalm lxxviii. 34—37.

fear of, that Saviour by whom he is bought with a price (the price of his precious blood), influences him in every circumstance of life.

“ If ye love me, keep my commandments,” are the words of our Shepherd ; and, above all, let us remember that this true repentance is the gift of God, and must be sought for by us in prayer.

I have considered it necessary in this place to say a few words on the nature of faith and repentance, in order more clearly to shew to the reader the purity of that religion which the Gospel inculcates. The Apostle very distinctly describes this purity, when he says to the Romans, “ I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable and perfect will of God*.” And St. Peter agrees with him perfectly, when he exhorts the followers of Christ, “ as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ †.”

But as this separation from the world, this renunciation of self, this patience in affliction, this

* Rom. xii. 1, 2.

† 1 Peter ii. 5.

victory over the body: in a word, this Christian holiness is not to be attained by unassisted human nature; as a “new heart and a right spirit” cannot be acquired by any effort of man’s reason, it is fit and proper that he should seek for these valuable gifts, these Christian graces, in that powerful aid which alone can enable him to surmount the corruptions of his nature. Jesus promises us in the following emphatic words, that they shall be given in answer to prayer: “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you *.” And the Apostle bids us, “Pray without ceasing.”

Prayer is the essence of religion; and praise is the effect of prayer. He who has once felt the power of prayer, will very soon praise the Almighty hearer of prayer: one cannot exist without the other, one flows spontaneously from the other. He who earnestly invokes his Creator, will in a little time as fervently praise and glorify him.

Nature herself instructs men to pray; reason conducts us to supplication. In terror, in sorrow, and in pain even the infidel cries to God. But the Christian’s prayer†, the prayer of faith, is

* Matt. vii. 7.

† “Prayer is the Christian’s vital breath,
The Christian’s native air,
His watchword at the gates of death—
He enters heaven with prayer.”

always the companion of praise : it is the work of the Holy Spirit ; once begun, it is continued. Thus the follower of Jesus prays to and praises God under every circumstance, in every situation of life. In health as in sickness, in prosperity as in adversity, in joy as in sorrow ; he invokes and he glorifies the God who guards, who redeems, and who sanctifies him. He lives by prayer. It is daily food to his soul ; and in it he seeks with ardour the assistance of God in the performance of his will. Prayer is the exercise which keeps the soul in health ; it is the support of our spiritual life ; and without prayer we are indeed spiritually dead.

How frequently do we find the faithful worshippers of Jehovah, under the Mosaic dispensation, using prayer as a means of protection from alarming dangers, and even against death itself ! Of this we have an example in the conduct of King Hezekiah. What encouragement has the Christian to pray, not only by such proofs as these, but by the beautiful promises which the Gospel holds out to believing prayer ; such as, " Whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."

If we examine the writings of the Evangelists, they will teach us, that our Lord himself was frequently found in the exercise of prayer. How many times in the course of his ministry do we find him retiring for the purpose of private devotion ; and even in the midst of his agonies on the

cross, he forgot not to pray ; but not for himself were his petitions poured out, nor for his friends, nor for the disciple whom he loved, nor even for his mother, but for his enemies, for his cruel murderers, for the persecuting unrelenting Jews ! Can we do other than learn by this example of our Lord to follow his holy precepts ; loving our enemies, and doing good to them that despitefully use us ? while every one of us must remember that no man can sin against his fellow, as we all have sinned against Christ.

Though we learn from holy writ that prayer has been in all ages the great resource, and the only safeguard of piety, yet it is not difficult to discover, that the excellency, the power, and the necessity of prayer, are all much more sensibly felt under the Gospel dispensation than they were under that of the Law.

St. Paul, in his First Epistle to the Thessalonians, gives them three maxims on Christian conduct ; or more properly I should say, on Christian devotion, which we shall find to be no less fitting guides for us, than for the followers of Christ in the days of the Apostles. “ Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks ; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you *.”

* 1 Thess. v. 16—18.

Let us take a brief examination of these words of the Apostle. The Christian, we must be ready to acknowledge, is bound to "rejoice evermore" in the glorious promises of the Gospel. He ought to rejoice in the efficacy of believing prayer, in the gift of the Holy Spirit to them that seek it; and in the inestimable treasure of the all-powerful blood of the Redeemer, in the certain hope through him of a glorious eternity. The follower of Jesus is further bound to "pray without ceasing," and this is to be done, not by being always on his knees, nor by being constantly engaged in the exercises of devotion; but by having God in all his thoughts; by placing an entire dependence on his care; by possessing a full confidence in his power; and a firm persuasion that if we cast our care upon him, He who careth for us will make our burden light. We ought further to "pray without ceasing," by being continually impressed with our utter helplessness, our entire insufficiency; by feeling convinced that the holiness, which the Gospel prescribes to us, we are not able to perform, except through him who gave us that invaluable treasure. In fact, to pray without ceasing is perpetually to bear in mind, that our heavenly Father is present with us at all times; that he sees us, that he hears us, that he guards and guides us; and that he not only sees us, but can search into the inmost recesses of our hearts, for every

concealed and secret thought. It is to dwell in his presence, and walk before him ; while every word, every wish, every action, every thought, have his glory for their object. In every thing we should give thanks for all the blessings which we hourly receive ; for our existence, our preservation, and for the inestimable gift of our redemption through our Lord Jesus Christ ; for safety in this life, for security in death, for a sure and perfect hope at the Day of Judgment.

Prayer should be possessed of two separate characters under the Gospel ; the one, that every petition which we make should be offered up in the name, and for the sake, of Jesus Christ, our Mediator and Redeemer ; the other, that its object should be sanctification here below, and eternal happiness above. I do not mean that we are forbidden to lay our temporal concerns before our heavenly Father. On the contrary, we are to tell out our sorrows to him, as to an affectionate parent, who pitieth us even more than an earthly Parent pities his own children : but in doing this we are never to forget the example of our Lord, who, in his agony in the garden, prayed, “ Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt *.” We are to pray in submission to what our heavenly Father may see best for us.

* Matt. xxvi. 39.

Under the Mosaic dispensation, the Jews prayed God to remember the covenant which he had made with Abraham. Surely it is only right for the followers of Christ to pray in the name of Him who sealed the new covenant with his blood, and ratified it by his death, his resurrection, and ascension. We wish not to enter into long controversies : but we say, if it be true that Jesus is risen from the dead, and ascended into heaven ; if he has again entered into that glory of his Father, which he left, for the salvation of man, for a season ; if all this be true, then it follows that Christians ought to pray in his name, and for his sake alone to ask for every blessing both here and hereafter.

We are taught by the Gospel, that relieving the poor is a part of our service to God. In St. Matthew, our Lord, after having described the glories of the second advent, beautifully portrays the offices of benevolence, and ends by declaring, " Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me *." In another place, he says, " Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away." Where else is kindness to our fellow-creatures thus beautifully enforced ? Will the Old Testament afford us any such examples of heavenly sweetness ? Does Moses,

* Matt. xxv.

do the Prophets, breathe such precepts of love to suffering humanity?

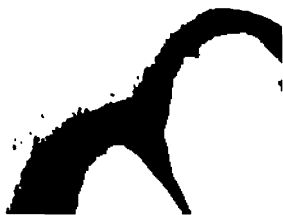
I cannot avoid pausing here, to repeat one assertion, That if we have proved the Old Testament true, in opposition to infidelity, by the superiority of its precepts over the compositions of all other authors, we have given the Jew double testimony in favour of the Gospel, by displaying its superiority even to the Old Testament itself, in every maxim which it advances. But let not any one for a moment suppose, that by saying this with regard to the New, we intend in the slightest degree to disparage the Old Testament: on the contrary, they add strength to each other, and must stand or fall together: the one is the foundation, the other the superstructure: We know that the durability of every building depends on the solidity and strength of its foundations, which are alone useful inasmuch as they support the edifice which is reared upon them. If we sap the foundation, the building, however lofty, beautiful, complete, and well-constructed, must inevitably fall. And if we take away the edifice, the foundation stones themselves must become a useless mass. Thus it is exactly with the Old and New Testament: take away the first, the second has nothing to support it; deprive the first of the beauty of the second, and it becomes unmeaning and unserviceable. The Old Testament is the foundation on which the

lovely edifice of the Gospel is reared. If we deprive it of its support on the Law and the Prophets, we throw the whole building into ruins: on the other hand, if we withdraw the Gospel from the pages of revelation, what do the ceremonies, the types, and the institutions of the Mosaic dispensation become? What do the predictions of the Prophets appear, but a useless heap of rubbish, a stumbling block to reason! The infidel might, in that case, with triumph exclaim, 'A revelation of the promises of God without any performance of them! a list of predictions without one fulfilment!' " But, thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ," we are not thus left to the taunts of the unbeliever. In the Law, the Prophets, and the Gospel, we behold a perfect building, complete in all its parts, and firmly fixed as upon a rock, strong beyond the art of man, or the power of the prince of darkness to overturn it; and beautiful beyond the beauty of every other production of the Creator of all things.

In the Bible then, we possess a *sure* reason for the hope that is in us; the everlasting foundation of that holy book being laid in the word of Jehovah to Moses and the Prophets, and the glorious building finished in the personal advent of the eternal Son, in the descent of the Holy Ghost the Comforter.

It only remains for us, in this chapter, once more

to remark, that the Gospel carries within itself the fullest proofs of its Divine origin in the excellency of its promises, the holiness of its precepts, and the purity of its worship. The whole is elevated so far above the Law of Moses, that it appears impossible to resist the Divine light which shines in its pages. It seems that the Jews must be enveloped by indeed a worse than Egyptian darkness to reject it. But let us not exult over them, because we are given grace in more abundance than they; let us rather pray for and study to treat them kindly. Let us be to them ambassadors for Christ, whenever they will be prevailed on to listen to us, placing the light of the Gospel in their view by the sanctity of our own lives, and displaying its beauties by the resistless force of Christian example; remembering that we are to "let our light shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven."



CHAPTER V.

FURTHER PROOFS OF THE TRUTH AND INSPIRATION OF THE GOSPEL, DRAWN FROM THE HISTORY OF THE LIFE OF OUR BLESSED LORD.

WE have shewn, in the preceding chapter, that the holiness and the excellency of the doctrines taught by our Saviour Christ and his Apostles in the Gospel, are at once sufficient and conclusive proofs of its Divine origin. We will however still further confirm the authenticity of its sacred truth, by displaying to the view of the reader the perfect life of its Founder.

It is, in the first place, an object well worth our attention, that the disciples of Jesus Christ never, in any of their writings, make the slightest attempt to partake with their Master in the glory of contributing to the salvation of mankind; but that, on the contrary, during the whole of their ministry they teach the way of eternal life as only attainable through the Redeemer himself. St. Paul, we find, even severely reproves the Corinthian converts for calling themselves by his name:

“ Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul ; and I of Apollos ; and I of Cephas ; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided ? was Paul crucified for you ? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul ? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius ; lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name *.”

In the disciples of Christ thus giving their beloved Master all the honour due to his name in the fullest extent, at a period so long after his death, we have one of the most powerful demonstrations of the Divine truth of the Gospel. Had they been impostors they would have attributed some glory to themselves : had they been imagining a history, they would at least have shared the triumph of some of the wonderful acts of their hero. We must remember that the Gospel was not preached at all till after the death and resurrection of our Lord : therefore the perfect conformity, which we find in every part of the New Testament, was not the effect of his presence, but it was produced by the power of that Holy Spirit, which he had promised should lead them into all truth.

The Evangelists explained clearly what their Divine Master had spoken in parables. They published and proclaimed that Christian liberty,

which Jesus had taught them ; and they carried that Gospel into all countries, the preaching of which had been at first confined to Judea. They performed many miracles in the name of their glorified Master ; they suffered much affliction ; and finally they sealed their mission with their blood. In the whole of their proceedings they claimed no praise for themselves ; they gave all the glory to that great Leader whose humble followers they professed to be ; and they constantly assured those who listened to their doctrine, that their teaching was of Him, and of Him alone, who died on the cross for the salvation of men.

Again ; why and from what motive did these faithful disciples apply themselves to write a history of Jesus Christ, and yet not one of them have instructed us concerning their own works ; not one individual among them has related to us his sufferings ; not one has told us of the effect of his own preaching ? The only record, which we have that approaches to any thing of the kind, is the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, as it is called, which was clearly written for the purpose of making known the first progress of Christianity, and the calling of the Gentile world to the knowledge of the true God, conformably to the prophecies, and not to give a history of the works of the disciples of Jesus as regarded themselves. Thus the account of the illustrious convert St. Paul, the

great Apostle to the Gentiles, goes no further than his first imprisonment, without instructing us concerning any of the circumstances of his after-life or death.

This extraordinary silence of the Apostles, both with regard to themselves and to each other, as to their lives, their sufferings, and their martyrdom, must be allowed to be a singular sacrifice of self-love and vain-glory ; such as we do not discover any where but in holy writ, and is, among the many others, to be reckoned as a strong proof of the Divine inspiration of the sacred writers. No human being, untaught of the Spirit of God, would have been so totally divested of self. We know what selfish beings we all are ; how anxious about a vain reputation. Then what but the Holy Ghost could have produced this singleness of heart in these men ? While these faithful disciples were so silent about themselves, so indifferent about their own fame, we find them most exact in their relations respecting their Divine Master, his doctrines, his sufferings, his miracles, his agony, and cruel death ; his blessed resurrection, and glorious ascension into heaven.

In this history of our Lord there are yet two other things to be kept in view ; namely, the excellency of the subject, and the qualifications of the writers ; and these two things, properly considered, are among the strongest of the proofs in favour of the Gospel.

The Evangelists fully sustain their subject throughout the whole of the history. The incarnation and the humiliation of our Lord ; the excellency of his person ; the fulness of his wisdom, his knowledge, his goodness, his mercy, and power, are all admirably represented. In the whole account we behold the majesty of the Deity shining through the veil of human flesh, which encompassed him. In their descriptions we view the blessed Son of God suffering, in his human nature, the penalty incurred by our misdeeds, but entirely free from the slightest taint of guilt himself. We see him, in whom was *no sin*, submitting to the imputation of *all our sins*. We see him, who commands the issues of life, groaning under the weight of death,—of death the most ignominious, which his enemies could inflict ; and we behold him triumphing over that death, bursting the bands of the tomb, and rising gloriously in the sight of his disciples to his dwelling in the heavens,—carrying with his Divine nature his human body, as an earnest to us that in our flesh we shall see God. We find the whole of this account so simply told, and so admirably sustained, that it carries with it the force of truth by the very nature of its relation. We view in the whole such a beautiful consistency that it binds it up together, and fastens upon it the power of Divine inspiration, without the assistance of any further proof. Let us next

consider what and who were the authors of this wonderful history? What were they as to qualifications and education; who were they as to situation in life, occupation, and ability for such a work? Were they philosophers? Were they learned theologists? Were they men in authority, and teachers of the people? They boasted of none of these distinctions. They were not men of great learning or exalted rank. They were possessed neither of authority to govern the people, nor of pre-eminent talents to lead them; but, on the contrary, they were, the one a poor unlettered fisherman, another an ignorant and uninstructed publican or tax-gatherer, and the remaining two far from either great or noble. If then the history, which these men have given us, is in perfect accordance with the majesty of their subject;—if the dignity as well as the simple style of their relations, must strike the understanding of even the most indifferent reader;—if the brightness of the Godhead shines conspicuously in the midst of the human sufferings of the blessed Redeemer, how can any one for a moment reject, deny, or doubt the Divine truth of the Gospel? For is it not manifestly impossible that a subject so delicate, so difficult, so glorious as the life, the death, and the resurrection of the Son of the Most High, could have been treated worthily by any human being, whatever his learning or his natural talents might

have been? How then can we for a moment believe, that the Gospel is the work, and not only *the work*, but, as the unbeliever says, the invention, of such unlettered penmen?

The authors of the Gospel make no secret of their ignorance; they do not conceal their humble situations in life. We cannot accuse them of affected humility in this, for we find in the New Testament itself a complete refutation of such an idea, by the many proofs which they themselves produce of their own want of knowledge and of their unbelief. They own to us that they frequently doubted respecting the power of our Lord, though they had been eye-witnesses of his miracles. They relate to us that they often understood the words of our Lord in a literal sense. Thus, when he spake of the leaven of the Pharisees*, they own they did not understand his meaning, but thought he was speaking merely of the leaven of bread, until he further explained himself. Our Lord at various times spoke to them of his death; but they acknowledge that subject to have been to them altogether a mystery. And we find, that he who afterwards, in the name of all the other followers of Christ, boldly declared to the Jewish nation, that this Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had crucified, God had raised up, and had placed at his right

* Matt. xvi.

hand, making his foes his footstool *;—I say, we behold in the Gospel this very disciple, who thus fearlessly declared his faith after the resurrection, receiving at a former period from our Lord that memorable rebuke, “Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men †.”

Again: how frequently do they tell us of their own false notions, of their expecting that the kingdom of Christ was to be a kingdom of this world! Is it to be believed, is it to be imagined, that in all this, these men were affecting an ignorance which they did not possess? Instead of spending our time in such vain objections and useless arguments, rather let us give the glory where it is due, and acknowledge the Spirit of the Lord in the composition of this history; let us humbly adore the power of that God, who has caused the weak things of the world to confound the strong, and who has chosen, by the meanness of his instruments, to display his own glory more perfectly, in so great a work as the description of the salvation of mankind through his beloved Son.

Though we have in the last chapter enlarged a little on the subject of faith, before we proceed

* Acts ii.

† Matt. xvi. 23.

in our examination of the history of Jesus Christ, I wish to say a few more words on it as connected with this relation. We must remember that it is a fundamental principle of our religion, that God saves mankind through faith; by which faith we take hold, in the sacred writings, of a sure hope of eternal life, procured to us by the sufferings of Christ. St. Paul says to the Hebrews, that "the just shall live by faith *." And, in the first verse of the eleventh chapter of the same Epistle, he tells us, that "faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." In his Epistle to the Romans, he says, "For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? †" Thus we see that hope assists us in seeking after those promises of God which faith secures to us. And in the word of God there are full and sufficient proofs of the truths on which the Christian's hope is built, to establish his faith immutably, if he is indeed earnestly seeking the way of salvation. Yet, as our faith rests on things not seen, the natural heart at enmity against God, while seeking its own gratification in the pleasures of the world, or while in the full career of sin, will find in its own corruptions sufficient opposition to the truths of the Bible, to repel

* Heb. x. 38.

† Rom. viii. 24.

every assurance of hope, and to destroy every promise of faith ; that hope and that faith which can alone flourish in the soul of the pious and humble follower of Christ.

It is no fault of mine, if I am not able to believe, says the infidel. How can I help this corruption of my nature ? says the unbeliever. I answer to both, The Bible is for you as well as for others ; repentance and faith will be given you, if you pray for them ; and if, in the hardness of your hearts, and the blindness of unbelief, ye reject the pages of revelation, remember ye are without excuse, and will only suffer justly the condemnation which ye procure for yourselves, “ for the wages of sin is death ; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord *.” This gift all may freely have, if they but sincerely desire it, undeserved as it is on our parts. This gift all may possess, if they but earnestly ask for it ; all may obtain it, if they but truly seek it.

Let not any one be inclined to bring forward such arguments as, that, if he is a “ vessel of wrath fitted for destruction,” it is no fault of his if he is in torments. Let him call to mind, that the Almighty wisdom and the determinate councils of God are beyond his comprehension ; that while on earth the wisest, the most pious, the best of men,

* Rom. vi. 23.

can only see "through a glass darkly *:" and let him not forget that the same God who has said, "I will shew mercy unto whom I will shew mercy †," has also declared, "For them that honour me, I will honour; and they that despise me, shall be lightly esteemed ‡;" while he has promised to the diligent and careful searcher after heavenly wisdom, "Those that seek me early shall find me §."

Instead of wasting our time in useless objections to the mysteries of revelation, let us lift up our hearts in some of the following petitions:—Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief: Lord save us, or we perish: Lord, remember us in thy kingdom: Lord, open our hearts to the power of thy word: Lord, renew us in the spirit of our minds; keep us in this life, and be our guide unto death.

Once more; we remind our readers that our Lord has promised, that all that ask shall receive, and that all that seek shall find: He has also said, "to him that knocketh, it shall be opened ||." Oh neglect not till too late, to attend to these injunctions of our Lord; for the day will come, when to ask will be useless, when to seek will be vain, when to knock will be no longer in your power.

* 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

† Exod. xxxiii. 19.

‡ 1 Sam. ii. 30.

§ Prov. viii. 17.

|| Matt. vii. 8.

Let us weigh well the importance of "seeking the Lord while he may be found." And let us not leave off our search almost as soon as we commence it, because we do not immediately see the effect of our efforts; for it is certain that the attributes of our God, brilliant as they are, are concealed beneath a veil, which is easily raised by genuine piety, but which becomes a cloud of thick darkness to the scorner and unbeliever; and while the meek, the humble, the contrite Christian will soon learn the way into the Holy of Holies, the impenitent, the impatient, and the haughty worldling will not so much as catch one glimpse of that brightness which his own conduct conceals from his eyes.

The Jews expected a Messiah, according to the promises of God by his prophets: but we have before remarked, that the veil was before their eyes; and they in their spiritual blindness, and the hardness of their hearts, perverted the prophecies, and looked for an earthly king, a conquering Messiah. And when told that Light was come into the world*, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, they shut their eyes against that Light, and rejected in him the Son of the Most High. Let us take example by their wilful blindness; let us avoid their errors, and earnestly pray

* John i. 9.

that by that glorious Light we may be led to a happy eternity, and find everlasting peace and joy in believing.

We will now proceed to consider some of the leading circumstances of the humiliation of our Lord, and see how far they serve to confirm and establish the Divine truth of holy writ.

Let us behold the eternal Son, full of beauty and majesty, leaving his Father's glory to take on himself human nature, and to dwell upon earth in the form of a servant: let us listen to the majestic announcement made to his virgin mother, concerning his miraculous incarnation: let us view this "first born among many brethren*," beginning his earthly career in a stable, and finding his cradle in a manger. But let us at the same time hearken to the song of the angels, proclaiming, "Peace on earth, and good will towards men†," through this glorious nativity. It is true we behold the Prince of Peace cradled in the shed of the stalled ox; but we also see the Magi laying at his feet the riches of the East, to which they added the incense of praise and adoration‡. He grows up as the reputed Son of a poor carpenter; but even at twelve years old he displays the wisdom of his almighty Father§.

* Rom. viii. 29.

† Matt. ii.

‡ Luke ii.

§ Luke ii.

We see him take upon himself the form of a servant, and submitting to humiliation for our sakes ; but we find that angels were ready to minister unto him. We are taught of his suffering for sin, though free from sin of every kind ; but we see in this suffering Saviour, the salvation of all those children of Adam who embrace this offered mercy.

We see him “ despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief*.” We view him expiring on the cross ; but we behold all nature shuddering at the deed : the rocks are riven, and the earth trembles, while the sun, ashamed, refuses its light. We behold the blessed Jesus laid in the tomb, it is true ; but we see that tomb refusing to detain him : and finally, we view him ascending to his dwelling in the heavens.

Will the infidel assert, that all these wonderful circumstances have their origin in the invention of any human being ? Surely if he will speak with candour, he must allow that every fact recorded by the Evangelists is in perfect unison with the excellence and grandeur of the subject, while the most beautiful simplicity pervades the whole ; and while every circumstance related is not only possible but probable, under the supposition of an

* Isai. liii. 3.

all-powerful Being, the Creator of heaven and earth, in the person of the Messiah.

In the writings of the Evangelists, facts are simply related, without any exclamations of admiration, without any expressions of indignation or horror. This, of itself, discovers to those, who are at all acquainted with human nature, an extraordinary elevation of thought in the authors of the sacred history.—To this we may add the surprising knowledge of prophecy, which is displayed by these unlettered historians. The greatest enemy of holy writ must allow that their interpretations are most ingenious; while the pious believer will readily admit, that the Spirit of God alone directed them in their application of the predictions of the Prophets to the person of our Lord. But let the infidel reflect; let him not make too hasty a determination. Could this glorious Gospel have been alone the work of these unlettered men? Could these ignorant and uninstructed Jews, by their natural powers, have drawn from the prophecies those truths which the most learned in the nation had not been able to discover? must they not have been taught by God in a most especial manner to enable them to perform this?

Oh ye, who, like the Israelite of old; ye who, like the Jew of this our day, obstinately reject and deny the Lord that bought you; pause before

you shut your eyes against the light of Divine truth : turn before it is too late, and embrace the Gospel. Remember that life or death, heaven or hell, are comprised in your choice ; not the life or death of the poor perishing body, but the everlasting life or death of your eternal soul.

And ye, ye unhappy sons of Abraham, ye who were once the favoured and chosen nation of Jehovah, to whom the oracles of his word were committed, refuse not the bread of life which the Gospel offers you, while ye prefer to feed on the empty husks of your ceremonies, your distinctions of meats, and your now useless sacrifices. I conjure you, examine the writings of the Apostles, compare them with Moses and the Prophets, and behold their perfect agreement in every part, while ye acknowledge, in Jesus of Nazareth, that Emanuel whom ye have so long expected *.

But, to return more immediately to our present subject, let us first consider the birth of John the Baptist, the forerunner of our Lord, as the account of it is given by St. Luke. This was miraculous ; and all the circumstances connected with him are perfectly agreeable to his commission ; for he was to prepare the way for the Messiah, he was to “ go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the disobedient to

* Isai. vii. 14.

the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people, prepared for the Lord *." Our limits will not permit us to follow the history regularly ; we must content ourselves with making, as they occur to us, a few general reflections on some of the most striking passages.

The history teaches us precisely the year, in which Jesus Christ and John his forerunner began their ministry. This accuracy is a proof of its truth : an impostor would have avoided such minuteness, as most likely to lead to his detection. We are instructed of the particulars in St. Luke thus : " Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judæa †," &c. We must refer the reader to the Testament itself for the continuation of the statement.

This particular account is as strong a proof of truth as any which we have advanced ; and we have every reason to be thankful for so much exactness, as in it we have the most irresistible arms against infidelity. In this place, as well as in others in Scripture, we find the pontiffs Annas and Caiaphas united together ; Caiaphas being the son-in-law of Annas, in whose family, by means of himself or sons, the pontifical chair had, for a considerable time, been preserved.

* Luke i. 17.

† Luke iii. 1.

A little further in the same chapter we are taught, that " Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli," &c. St. Matthew gives us a full account of the baptism of Jesus, and relates, on John's objection to administer it to him, that he gave this memorable reply, " Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness *."

Let us pause one moment, and reflect on this extraordinary circumstance ; Jesus, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, presenting himself to John, his servant, his messenger, for baptism ! Surely the simple relation of this fact gives great weight to the testimony of the Evangelists ! Would any human being, however richly gifted with the powers of imagination, however highly talented in other respects, have thus brought the Lord to the feet of his servant, to apply to him for an unction ! This is the exclamation which we are naturally led to make ; but when, in the spirit of piety, we examine this fact, we discover in it, as related by the Evangelists, a beauty and consistency which stamps truth upon the whole. We may also observe, that the reply of our Lord affords a wholesome example to those who cavil and object to every thing that they consider as unnecessary, however high the

* Matt. iii. 15.

authority, however Divine the source of its origin. Thus, with regard to the use of water in Baptism, or to the outward elements of bread and wine in the Eucharist; let us not object to them because they are simply what they appear to be. It is true they are no more; but they imply a gift of grace from the Holy Spirit to the soul, which, though not seen, *may* verily and indeed be felt. And if our Lord partook of the first, and immediately before his death instituted the second, let us remember, for his sake, and in his name, humbly to fulfil what he has commanded, beseeching him that the outward and visible sign may be accompanied by the inward and spiritual grace. Our Saviour's baptism was followed by an immediate emanation of the Spirit, and a seal was set to his ministry from above: "And, lo, the heavens were opened unto him; and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased *."

We find our Lord, after his baptism, led by the Spirit into the wilderness, expressly, we are told, "to be tempted of the devil †," for "he was in all points tempted like as *we are*, yet without sin ‡." He was to experience the power of temptation, as the first Adam did; but there was to

* Matt. iii. 16, 17. † Matt. iv. ‡ Heb. iv. 15.

be this striking difference ;—the first Adam was tempted and fell ; the Second Adam was tempted, and came victoriously out of his fiery trial.

We have before observed, that as the children of Israel were a type of the spiritual children of God, so was Moses a type of Christ, who was to be their leader. Now, the birth of Moses was signalized by the death of little children ; so was that of Jesus by the murder of the infants of Bethlehem.

After his birth, we learn nothing of Moses in holy writ, until he came to visit his brethren, just before his entrance into his ministry. From his nativity, we hear little more of Jesus till his baptism. Moses fasted forty days in the mount when he received the Law from God. Jesus fasted forty days in the desert before he announced the kingdom of heaven to the people. We do not find the Evangelists detaining themselves to make such reflections as these. It was their design to relate facts ; facts so grand in themselves, that the mere recital of them afford us abundant matter for reflection ; and these holy penmen, without the learning of the historian, without the eloquence of the scholar, sustain by the simple relation of their subject, the dignity of the whole.

In each Gospel there is a sufficient accordance with the other, to establish the truth of all, without the slightest appearance of agreement or col-

lusion between the authors. The whole is a complete history, and in every respect fully answers to its Divine origin, in such a manner that it must convince any reasonable mind, that these unlettered men wrote under very different teaching from any human instruction,—namely, the actual inspiration of the Spirit of God.

As we examine the life of our Lord throughout, we cannot but discover a prudence, a wisdom, and holiness which shines beyond any human conception. There is not any circumstance recorded by the Evangelists, which is not entirely consistent with the dignity and excellence of the Son of God. His words, his actions, all agree in perfection and knowledge. There is nothing overstrained in his character; all is natural, and in strict accordance the one part with the other. No figures of rhetoric are employed, no overbearing eloquence is introduced; all is simple, easy, and clear. Each Evangelist relates what he saw and knew; and the whole forms a relation which opens to man a new covenant with his Maker, through the sufferings of his Eternal Son.

The sacred penmen do not use any arguments to persuadé us to believe: they tell us facts; or, in other words, they unveil to us a beautiful picture, which they permit us to examine, leaving us to become the real possessors, if we discover its inestimable value. Truth is their only guarantee,

because their truth is celestial, and carries within itself its proof. To tell a pious reader, that the New Testament is an inspired volume, is like telling a man in possession of his eye-sight, when the sun is shining at noon, that it is broad day.

In the recital which the Evangelists give us concerning the instructions of our Lord, what simplicity, yet what clearness do we find; what mildness, and what authority are displayed; what humility and what wisdom are united! His examples and comparisons, they teach us, were drawn from the common occurrences of life, with which all were intimately acquainted. Proverbs, and such other modes of speech, were used, as were suited to the understandings of the ignorant; yet the conversation of our Lord retained, under every circumstance, a purity, an originality, and a power which no human being has ever been known to imitate. "Never man spake like this man," was emphatically and truly said of him. Not only do we find the lowly Jesus receiving and instructing the poor, but we behold him comforting and pardoning the penitent sinner. He who came to seek and save that which was lost, despised not the humble self-abased Publican, while he warned and rejected the proud and hypocritical Pharisee.

Our space will not permit us to follow our Lord through his instructions, his parables, and miracles. Our object here, is not to bring forward the beau-

ties of revelation, but to establish the truth of it. We do not intend that he, who peruses this volume, should do it to gratify his curiosity; but our earnest desire is, that those, who doubt the Divine power of the Bible, either from a disregard of its pages, or those who deny it from an obstinate rejection of their contents, may be led, in a pious spirit of inquiry, to turn to the sacred volume and search for themselves. Every word of our Lord has a value in it so genuine, that each sentence from his lips declares him to be God the Son.

Behold his zealous obedience to his heavenly Father, displayed in those few words to his disciples, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me *." Observe his zeal for the glory of God when he drove the money-changers, and those who sold doves, from the temple. "And "Jesus" said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves †." Listen to the beautiful promise contained in those words: "For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother ‡." What other writer ever described a character like that of Jesus Christ, as given by the Evangelists? Who else ever drew one in any way to resemble it? Where do we meet with such a description of any

* John iv. 34.

† Matt. xxi. 13.

‡ Matt. xii. 50.

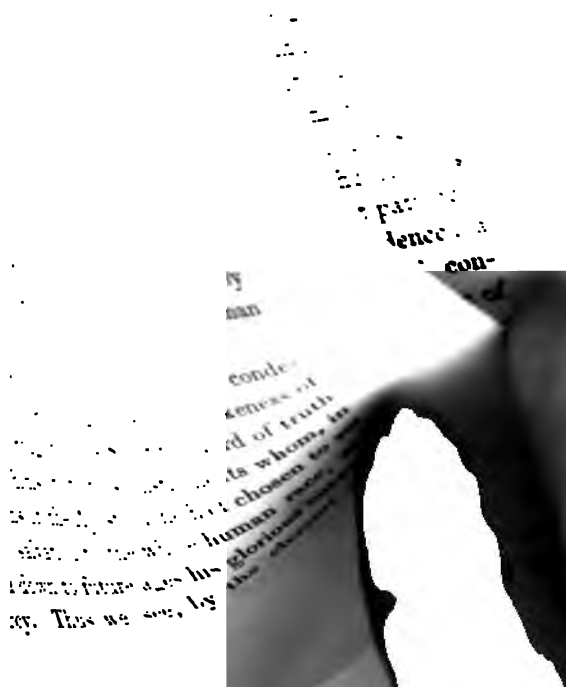
other being? So much knowledge, so much penetration, so much heavenly wisdom, such meekness and prudence; such boldness in reproving; such tenderness in forgiving; such sweetness of soul; such unaffected humility; such unlimited charity; such purity of heart and conduct; such unfeigned piety; such patience in suffering; such majesty in governing! Where, I repeat, but in the writings of the Evangelists, can we discover such a portrait? The most penetrating observer cannot pick out one fault in it. All is exactly what the Son of God, in human flesh subsisting, ought to be; yet every circumstance is very different from what a man, however ingenious he might be, would have imagined, if he had been relating a fictitious history. From whence then, I ask, did these men acquire this talent of description, this perfect knowledge, this masterly conception of the Godhead veiled in human nature?

Right reason answers at once, He who condescended to shade his brightness in the likeness of sinful man, taught by his Spirit the word of truth regarding himself, to those instruments whom, in the persons of the Apostles, he had chosen to set forth his salvation to the whole human race, and to hand down to future ages his glorious covenant of mercy. Thus we see, by the clearest of all

ties of revelation, but to establish it. We do not intend that he, who peruses it, should do it to gratify his curiosity; the desire is, that those, who doubt the truth of the Bible, either from a disregard of its contents, or those who deny it from an obstinacy of their contents, may be led, in a candid inquiry, to turn to the sacred volume for themselves. Every word of it is of value in it so genuine, that each sentence declares him to be God the Son.

Behold his zealous obedience to his Father, displayed in those few words, "My meat is to do the will which sent me *." Observe his zeal for the temple when he drove the money-changers, and sold doves, from the temple. "And he said unto them, It is written, My house shall be the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves †." Listen to the beautiful portrait contained in those words: "For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." What other writer ever described a character so true as that of Jesus Christ, as given by the Evangelist. Who else ever drew one in any way to resemble him? Where do we meet with such a description of him?

* John iv. 34. † Matt. xxi. 13. ‡ Matt. xii. 40.



demonstrations, that the Apostles were inspired by the Holy Spirit in all they wrote. This is the genuine consequence of the nature of the life of Christ. We will see, in the next chapter, how far his death confirms this fact.

CHAPTER VI.

THE HISTORY OF THE DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST;
A FURTHER CONFIRMATION OF THE DIVINE
AUTHORITY OF THE GOSPEL.

IN the history of the life of our blessed Lord, we have seen that the Evangelists have given us the picture of a man altogether wise and holy, perfectly meek and gentle, full of the utmost tenderness to the afflicted, abounding in mercy to the poor, and forgiveness to the penitent ; but severe to the proud, the hypocritical, and the envious. To these virtues they have added great patience, astonishing firmness, and wonderful prudence ; a wisdom which surprised his hearers, and confounded his enemies ; and a perfect knowledge of events, past, present, and to come ; with the power of working miracles.

It now remains for us to see how far the circumstances of his death are in unison with those of his life. This, every one will allow to be the most difficult part of the history. We have many instances on record of those who made a shining figure in their career through life, miserably dis-

appointing the world at the closing scene ; leaving the historian to relate their dismay at the approach of the king of terrors, or to throw a veil of silence over their entrance into the dark valley.

The death of Jesus Christ was cruel and ignominious, accompanied with every circumstance capable of overwhelming the soul of man. Betrayed by one disciple, denied by another, deserted by all, mocked and insulted both by his own nation and the Romans ; nailed to a cross, the punishment inflicted only on slaves and robbers ; there expiring in bitter agony, a spectacle to all people ! the Jews preferring a murderer to him, their everlasting King ! the same persons who had marvelled at his miracles, glorying in his death, and reviling him in his direful anguish !

Let us for a time fix our thoughts on the firmness, with which this Divine Person drinks the bitter cup. While expiring in the midst of torture, he prays for his murderers, " Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do *." And breathes out his soul in saying, " Father, into thy hands I commend my Spirit †."

The Evangelists teach us, that Jesus, far from turning his eyes from death, had considered the subject attentively and constantly, without having for a moment been drawn from the purposes of his

* Luke xxiii. 34.

† Luke xxiii. 46

ministry by its terrors. He often foretold to his disciples that he must die at Jerusalem. He knew that he should be delivered by the Jews to the Gentiles, and by them be put to an open shame; that he should be rejected by both governors and people. This he had predicted in many parables. By his perfect knowledge of these coming events, we must be fully persuaded that his death was voluntary; that he could readily have avoided it, if he had chosen to do so. Throughout the whole we behold an overruling Providence in Jesus Christ, working all things together, according to the predictions of the Prophets, for the salvation of mankind. More than once, we know, that the enemies of Jesus were withheld from executing their vengeance from fear of the people. More than once, we are taught, that he concealed himself from them, because "his hour was not yet come;" but when he in his Divine wisdom saw fit, we find him submitting to be led to crucifixion as a Lamb to the slaughter, first having told his disciples, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father *."

* John x. 17, 18.

The death of Jesus was not the natural decay of the mortal body, after a lengthened number of years. It was not the effect of disease on the constitution after months of suffering; neither was it an effort of extraordinary courage, produced by an ambitious representation of greatness of soul, making a sacrifice of the short remainder of a sorrowful life to exist in the annals of fame. Our Lord laid down his life in the fulness of his strength, in the flower of his age, in the midst of usefulness; he died a violent and ignominious death by the hands of public executioners. He willingly submitted to this, that the eternal purposes of Almighty God, for the salvation of sinful man, might be carried into effect. He knew that he must suffer at Jerusalem; he went there openly; he celebrated the passover for the last time with his disciples; he disclosed to Judas that he was acquainted with the treacherous purpose to betray him, which lurked in his heart; he in the most solemn manner instituted the holy Eucharist, in memory of his approaching death; and then he prepared for the awful event. He did not go to death as the blind man, who, seeing no danger, rushes fearlessly to the edge of the precipice; he went not vain gloriously, despising the suffering. On the contrary, "being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling

down to the ground *." Yet he approached the hour of suffering with a resignation and firmness, which mere humanity could not have produced. We may admire the greatness, with which heroes have devoted themselves for the good of their country; but they have thrown themselves into danger armed with every defence, which the policy of man could invent. We may behold with astonishment the false heroism which leads some men to rush unbidden into the presence of their Maker; while we shudder with horror at the awful consequences to their eternal souls: but these people have no religion; they have discarded every right feeling, and they are left to all the direful effects of an evil heart of unbelief †.

But the pious, the holy Jesus, he who was God and man united, he who could command the universe, he who could require myriads of angels to minister unto him, met death for our sakes, with every circumstance calculated to make it terrible, that he might make the satisfaction which the justice of God required for sinful man; and, painful as the suffering was to his human nature, in

* Luke xxii. 44.

† I speak not of those unhappy beings whom it has pleased Almighty God, through disease, or some other cause, to deprive of reason, and who in that state may have been led to attempt self-destruction.

the end it was swallowed up in victory. He approached the trying hour, not without those feelings of alarm incidental to flesh and blood, but they clouded his Divine progress only during a sufficient time to convince us, that he was really *like as we are*, though without sin; and then we find him assuming the intrepidity and firmness of his Divine character, which never more forsook him.

If, on the one hand, in this mixture of weakness and strength, of fear and assurance, we find matter of surprize; on the other hand, the nature of the enterprize, and the magnificent completion of it, both charm and elevate the soul; and in each we discover a most powerful proof of the Divine truth of the history.

Let us for a moment reflect attentively on this description of a death so singular in its circumstances, and so glorious in its consequences. And let us ask ourselves simply this question,—Could we have imagined such a history as the Evangelists have given us? Could we have succeeded as they have done, in representing the Eternal Son of God, clouding his Divine Majesty in human flesh for the purposes of man's redemption? And could we have conveyed to the minds of the readers, in the same admirable way, the two different situations in which the history describes our Lord; the one, that of suffering humanity, in

tears, prayers, and supplications, prostrate before his heavenly Father, and the other delivered from his fear, and triumphing over death, in all the energy of his Divine nature.

When our Lord had instituted the memorial of his death, in those affecting words recorded by St. Matthew and St. Luke, "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me;" and "Drink ye all of this; for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins *;" he had only to pour forth his blood for the completion of his ministry; and then the Evangelists relate that his soul was sorrowful, even unto death, and he had recourse to prayer in those memorable words: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt †." Three several times did he in these words betray the bitterness of his soul. We learn from the disciples, their indifference to their Lord's agony; we find that they repeatedly fell asleep, when called on to watch and pray. I ask, Would impostors have lowered themselves in this manner? If they had been merely putting forth a tale of fiction, they would surely more nearly have approached the character of their Divine

* Matt. xxvi. 26; Luke xxii. 19, 20. † Matt. xxvi. 39.

Master, in their description of themselves, rather than have suffered themselves to be betrayed into a relation so little conducive to their own honour, or that of the other disciples.

It is related by the Evangelists, that our Lord's agony was so great that he sweated, as it were, great drops of blood.

His human nature, for a time, partook of the fear of death, inherent to it. On that point we have commented before ; but what devotion, to the will of his heavenly Father accompanied this agony ! In a short time he was delivered from all his fear ; he arose and called his disciples ; and then with what firmness, yet with what patient meekness, do we behold him acting throughout the dismal scene ; there the intrepidity of his Divine character displayed itself in perfect beauty.

We view him, in the midst of cruel mockings, meeting a terrible death with calmness. We behold him, while from his hands and his feet the purple stream is issuing, praying for the blind and infatuated Jews. We hear him recommending his weeping mother to the care of his beloved disciple John. Then we see him meekly bowing his head, declaring the work of salvation to be " finished ;" and while this is taking place, the sun ashamed hides his light, leaving the world shrouded in darkness, and the graves acknowledge his victory

by giving up their dead, for "many bodies of the saints which slept arose*." Such are the chief circumstances of the history, which the Evangelists give us of the death of the Saviour of the world. The truth of which, the infidel is bold enough to deny, while he at the same time acknowledges that the Evangelists have *certainly* done justice to their subject, and have, he must allow, surpassed all other writers, in the simplicity and dignity of their style. I repeat, once more, the same question which must so often recur in the examination of the Gospel: From whence did these men derive such talents? What produced in them such a display of the powers of the historian? How did they contrive to draw so correct a portrait of one to whom they attributed all the power of the Godhead, while they arrayed him in the garb of humanity?

Jesus, they proceed to tell us, arose again the third day, as it was predicted that he would. They describe this circumstance as accompanied by many wonders; by an earthquake, by the stone which had been *made sure*, having been rolled away from the mouth of the sepulchre, by its having been astonishingly removed. They tell us of the Roman soldiers having been seized with

* Matt. xxvii. 52.

horrible dread; of the appearance of angels; of our Lord making himself known to his followers, after expounding the Scriptures, in breaking of bread; of the unbelief of Thomas; and his subsequent wonderful exclamation of "My Lord, and my God *!" These are all circumstances perfectly consistent in a relation of this kind, but yet such as no human being could have invented.

The sufferings of the Messiah had been fully predicted by Isaiah. The Psalmist had dwelt at length on the same subject. The Evangelists, in their history of Christ, satisfactorily prove to us, that all those predictions were fulfilled in his person. These unlearned men bring the ancient prophecies forward with propriety and aptitude, and they throw light on many difficult passages. How did they accomplish, what the wisest of the nation had not been able to discover? With this question we will take leave of this part of the subject. In the next chapter we have still further proofs to produce of the truth and inspiration of the holy Scriptures.

* John xx. 28.

CHAPTER VII.

REFLECTIONS ON THE NEW TESTAMENT, IN
FURTHER PROOF OF ITS DIVINE ORIGIN.

THE disciples of Jesus having received the gift of the Holy Spirit, according to the promise of our Lord, obeyed his command of "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost * ;" having first formed a church at Jerusalem, of which the sacred historian in a single expression gives us a more exalted idea, than volumes from the pen of an uninspired writer, "And the multitude of them that believed, were of one heart and of one soul," &c. † Thus we see the preaching of the everlasting Gospel had its commencement in Jerusalem, and from thence it was rapidly spread among the Gentile nations.

It is clear that the history of our Lord was not reduced to writing till some time after the establishment of the church at Jerusalem; for neither in the Acts of the Apostles, nor in the Epistles, do

* Matt. xxviii. 19.

† Acts iv. 32.

we find any quotations from the Gospels ; which would naturally have been the case, had they been in being at the time the events related in the one, and alluded to in the others, occurred. Being full of the Holy Ghost, the Apostles spake without plan or premeditation, as circumstances called forth their energies ; fearlessly carrying the name of Jesus from city to city, from province to province, offering to all to partake of the waters of life freely, according to the commands of their heavenly Master, that they were to “ preach the Gospel to every creature *.”

When the word of Christ had extended over many countries when believers were every where “ added to the church daily,” it cannot be doubted but that many became anxious to be possessed of a statement of the remarkable facts of the birth of the Messiah, together with that of his holy life and triumphant death. It is probable that at that time some incorrect accounts had found their way into circulation, which explains St. Luke’s introduction to his Gospel beginning in these words, “ Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things,” &c.

From this preface of St. Luke’s, one gathers three things : first, that some histories of Christ

* Mark xvi. 15.

which had already made their appearance, were incorrect and imperfect : but, secondly, we do not discover that he means to imply that the design of these authors was blameable ; he only appears to give us to understand that their attempt had not been happily executed : indeed, it is quite plain, that when St. Luke wrote this, it was not directed against those spurious Gospels which afterwards inundated the Christian church ; for his expressions are not pointed and strong, as we can easily imagine they would have been, had he been attacking deceit and falsehood. Thirdly, our observation is led to this conclusion, namely, that when he thus addressed himself to “ Theophilus,” the *friend of God* he could not have seen either of the other Gospels of Matthew, Mark, or John ; either from their not having been composed, as was the case decidedly with regard to St. John’s Gospel, or from his ignorance of the existence of the other two ; for it is not at all probable that he would have included such indisputably Divine composition in his remarks about imperfect and incorrect histories, without making any exceptions in their favour.

St. Luke tells us himself, that he wrote his Gospel before he recorded the Acts, of which he was also the author. With regard to the writings of the three other Apostles, tradition varies as to

the exact time at which they were published ; this is a subject on which it is useless to disturb the mind by conjecture. We have clearly established them to be the inspired word of truth ; which, in fact, is the only part of the argument which is really important to the pious Christian : but still the inquiry is not wrong, when carried on in a spirit of humility to satisfy a laudable curiosity. But, alas ! there are some, we know, who make their inquiries in a very different spirit from this ; some who in fact only make them to cavil and raise objections. The most received opinion on this subject is to be found in Ireneus, who tells us, that St. Matthew published his Gospel in Hebrew, and preached to the people at the same time in that language ; and that St. Mark, the disciple of Peter, left us in writing those things which that Apostle preached. While St. Luke, the companion of Paul, wrote that Gospel, concerning the particulars of which he was instructed by him ; and some time after St. Luke, John, the beloved disciple, published his Gospel, while he dwelt at Ephesus.

Theophylactes says, in his preface to his commentaries on St. Matthew, that the Gospel of that Apostle was written eight years after the ascension of Jesus ; that St. Mark published his two years after St. Matthew's had made its ap-

pearance. St. Luke, he continues to tell us, wrote five years after St. Mark, and St. John not till thirty-two years after our Lord's ascension. Some people indeed, have believed that St. John wrote his Gospel at a very advanced age, as much as ninety-eight years after the nativity of our Lord. I confess, I cannot at all enter into this supposition. I can much more readily follow that of Theophylactes, for it does not appear to me at all probable that St. John should have written his Gospel after the destruction of Jerusalem; for if this had been the case, surely he would not have passed over such an awful circumstance in silence; particularly as it was an event which our Lord had so distinctly foretold. If he wrote thirty-two years after the ascension, as Theophylactes relates, his Gospel would, in that case, have preceded the fall of Jerusalem some years.

However, this is a matter which does not affect our eternal salvation; and as Almighty Wisdom has thought fit not to set it forth in revelation, we may, without the slightest impropriety, form our own conjectures on it; and draw such conclusions from the various accounts which we have, as appear to us to be the most reasonable, remembering that true believers in the revealed word of God, are not required to be slaves to the traditions of men.

According to the Fathers, the most probable

conjecture agrees with what we have before said, namely, that St. Matthew's Gospel was written in Hebrew first; then St. Mark's in Greek, with the Hebrew in view; and that St. Luke wrote some time after St. Matthew and St. Mark, without being aware of the existence of their Gospels; and after all these three were published, St. John wrote the Gospel which is distinguished by his name, being well acquainted with their contents, and avoiding as much as possible a repetition of them, while he gave to the world at length those beautiful discourses of our Lord's, with which his Gospel abounds, and to which he had been so often an ear-witness.

In the midst of the diversity of opinion, which has existed with respect to the exact time in which the Gospels were published, we have the fullest assurance that those four, which are received into the New Testament, are the only writings of the kind which were admitted by the primitive church to be inspired; and this, we cannot doubt, was done with the greatest care, and not without the most satisfactory proofs of their Divine authenticity; for many, we know, were in those early ages rejected, though they had some considerable pretensions to correctness, but on which the stamp of Divine truth was not affixed as it was on the writings of the four Evangelists, by their very nature. The Epistles, and the Revelation of St. John, have each

also gone through the same fiery ordeal, in the first ages of Christianity, and have all by that test been solemnly verified as the inspired word of God. These reflections must be to every pious mind most satisfactory and most delightful. If we wanted confirmation of the authority of the New Testament, beyond what our former chapters contain, the examination which these Books underwent, the hesitation which was made, before some of them were received, (such as the Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews, and the Second and Third Epistles of John, together with his Apocalypse), would be sufficient proof of their Divine truth ; for, we may rest assured, that the authenticity of each Book was clearly ascertained and well-founded in *all particulars*, before it was added to the volume of revelation ; that merely its evidence on the face of it was not considered sufficient. If this had not been the case, no hesitation could have been made about the admission of those Books of the New Testament, of which we have spoken, since they contain, in their nature and composition, certainly as clear proofs in favour of their Divine origin as any other parts of Scripture.

The infinite difference, which there is between the writings of the Apostles, and the works which remain to us of some of those who succeeded them, is another convincing argument, that the authors

of the New Testament were, in an especial manner, directed by the Holy Spirit. If the Apostles were not inspired, if they did not write under the particular guidance of God, why did not the compositions of those, who immediately succeeded them, possess equal beauty? Why did not they contain the same force of argument, and perspicuity of language; the same sublimity of manner, arrayed in equal simplicity of expression? To descend from the writings of the Evangelists, to the compositions of their followers, is, as all, who are acquainted with the subject, will admit, only to be compared to a sudden transition from the brightness of the meridian sun to the darkness of midnight.

Tell me, ye who deny a Divine revelation, how is it that there is this mighty difference? How is it that these men alone treat of the salvation of man in a way worthy of God? And ye, who do believe the glorious truths of the Scripture, and adore the mercies of that God who bestowed them on you, while ye join me in asking this question of all those who reject the written word; unite with me also in earnest prayer for them, beseeching the Lord, that their understandings may be opened by the power of the Holy Spirit, and that they may, through grace, joyfully receive the tidings of salvation which the Bible contains.

CHAPTER VIII.

OF THE PREDICTIONS CONTAINED IN THE
NEW TESTAMENT.

THE New Testament contains very few prophecies, with the exception of the Book of Revelation, which is wholly prophetical, because the coming of the Messiah, and the commission which he gave to his disciples to “teach all nations*,” together with the certain hope which the Gospel contains of a resurrection to eternal life, dissipated the obscurity in which the promises of God had been concealed under the Mosaic dispensation. All being accomplished, predictions were no longer required to teach men, *through* the typical sacrifices of beasts, to look for salvation to the blood of the spotless Messiah, yet we find in the New Testament a sufficient number to answer every purpose of demonstration as to its Divine origin; some very remarkable prophecies are to be discovered in its pages, a few of which we will instance here.

The first which we shall notice, are those which

* Matt. xxviii. 19.

respect the calling of the Gentiles, and the wonderful progress of Christianity. Of these our Lord frequently speaks in Parables, and often in express terms. The Parable of the Prodigal Son, and also that of the Marriage Supper were evidently both delivered in allusion to this. The fall of Jerusalem is distinctly predicted by Jesus Christ; and in most impressive language he wept over that devoted city, and pathetically addressed it in these words: "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation *."

We know by profane history that this prophecy was, a few years afterwards, literally fulfilled. This prediction, of the destruction of Jerusalem, conducts us to what our Lord said also respecting the end of the world, and the universal judgment. All this perfectly agrees with the justice of God, and the nature of the covenant which he had made with man.

* Luke xix. 42—44.

We have before said, that the entrance of the Jewish nation into the land of Canaan, was a type of the introduction of the children of God into the heavenly Canaan. The Israelites were to be considered too as in many particulars mystically representing the whole world: by the desolation of Judea we had a shadow of that great day when our Lord will again appear to judge the world. This is the obvious reason, why the predictions on each of these subjects were so united, that some of the sentences actually contain allusions to both events; and this is the only satisfactory way of explaining those passages, such as, "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels

of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be *." It is not possible, by the ablest sophistry, to divest this passage of allusion both to the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world. Let those who daringly deny, or those who weakly doubt the formidable truths of a final judgment, reflect on these predictions of our Lord with attention and awe; let them see how intimately the prophecy of the fall of Jerusalem is blended with that of the last day, and remember, that as certainly as the one has been accomplished, so will the other be, with all its accompanying terrors to the wicked, though with mercy and blessedness to those who walk with their lamps trimmed, in constant preparation for the approach of the Bridegroom.

I pass over our Lord's prophecies to Peter and John, touching the death of the one, and the long life of the other. From these, we will pause a few moments to consider a very celebrated prediction which is to be discovered in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans. Of the subject, of which the Old Testament affords many examples in its prophecies, I mean the final restoration of the Jews; which, in my opinion, is very distinctly alluded to by St. Paul, in the following words:

* Matt. xxiv. 30—37.

“ For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits ; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved *.”

I cannot persuade myself that this prophecy has been accomplished. I cannot believe that the individual conversions among the Jews have been its fulfilment, when I see them, as a nation, not less spiritually dark than they were at the crucifixion of our Lord ; and I am not singular in this opinion, for many able and pious commentators have held the same doctrine. These expressions of St. Paul, so full of energy and majesty as they are, demand a much more ample signification. Though Christianity rapidly spread itself in the first ages, and though it has shewn by its endurance that it is “ of God,” yet we know that “ the fulness of the Gentiles ” is not by any means come in ; and we lament while we see that all Israel is not saved. It is not according to the style of holy writ to speak of small things with words of great sound, and these expressions of St. Paul would appear very hyperbolical, if we could suppose them to mean only those individual conversions which have already taken place both among Jew and Gentile, when we know that so many

* Rom. xi. 25, 26.

millions of the former, and whole nations of the latter, still sit in darkness ; some refusing to come to the light, and others never even having heard of its brightness.

God alone in his wisdom knows how and when the mystery of which St. Paul speaks is to be accomplished ; but this ought not to deter Christians from daily making it their prayer, that he will see fit by bringing in the fulness of the Gentiles, to hasten the salvation of the Jews ; and they ought to use every proper human means for the conversion of both ; earnestly beseeching a blessing on their efforts, and then they may humbly and attentively examine the pages of prophecy as regards these events. Until it pleases God to open the mystery to us, by the accomplishment of the predictions, all our inquiries can end in little more than conjecture, as to the time of its actual fulfilment ; but these inquiries, if carried on with piety and humility, can never be improper, for we are commanded to “ search the Scriptures,” and they are given for instruction in every way. But as God’s ways are unsearchable, so has he seen fit to throw a veil over his prophecies, which cannot be entirely taken away by man, till the same God orders the removal of it, by bringing the events to pass, teaching us that all wisdom, knowledge, and power are in his hands alone.

It seems probable, that as the Gentiles were

excluded from the covenant with Abraham for two thousand years, the same term will expire, before the Jews will, as a nation, embrace the privileges of the Gospel. But I desire to repeat, that this opinion does not assume a higher character than that of humble conjecture.

We find another prediction of the same Apostle, contained in the second chapter of his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, and which is equally remarkable, though on a very different subject : “ Let no man deceive you by any means, for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped ; so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.”

To see plainly who this “ man of sin ” is, we have only to consider St. Paul’s words attentively, and in him we cannot help discovering the head of the Romish church. He “ exalteth himself above all that is called God,” by requiring obedience from princes, kings, and emperors. He “ is worshipped, so that he is as God ; sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.” This he does by claiming to himself an infallibility equal to God, both in his own person, and for the church over which he presides. It is impossible to shut our eyes against this prophecy,

so very distinct, so very circumstantial, that it at once supplies Popery with an argument in favour of her concealment of the Scriptures from the people. Shall we give them weapons with which to destroy our boasted supremacy? say the cardinals, the bishops, and the priests of the man of sin. If we throw down our idol, if we expose his defects to the bright pages of Scripture, if we set him within the full blaze of Divine truth, what shall become of us? But to go on, this same Apostle predicts, in another place, that "in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron: forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth *." Can any one deny that this prediction has found its accomplishment in this same church, whose governor claims to himself every privilege of the Godhead?

In the Revelation of St. John, which book is altogether prophetical, the Apostle predicts the fall of Rome. He calls it the name of Babylon. Here it is not ancient heathen Rome, but Rome is the prophecy



The leading predictions then, which are to be found in the New Testament, are, the ruin of the Jewish nation, the calling of the Gentiles, and the final restoration of Israel. The empire of Rome, under the man of sin, its power over the minds of men for a time, and the final and total destruction of that kingdom, are all three distinctly set forth under the typical name of Babylon. The end of the world, and the final judgment, are also expressly and particularly declared in the New Testament. Great and wonderful are the whole of these predictions: they are prophecies, which must indeed deeply interest every true member of the church of Christ. However this be, it is not their interesting nature which leads us to bring them forward here. It is not so much to consider them as regards the events themselves, as it is from their force to deduce another reason for the Divine truth of holy writ. We have admitted in the first part of this work, that one prediction fulfilled, carries with it a weight of evidence for the truth of the whole of Scripture, which effectually and successfully overbalances all opposition.

No one will pretend to deny the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman arms. In this then, without proceeding one step further, we find a seal set on the Divine inspiration of the whole Gospel.

We might go on with the same argument as re-

gards St. Paul's predictions respecting the Romish church ; but we will leave our subject here. From what we have said, the reader cannot fail to draw strong conclusions in favour of holy writ. In our next chapter, we will proceed to establish the Gospel by its memorials or monuments.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MEMORIALS OR MONUMENTS WHICH THE
GOSPEL AFFORDS US, A FURTHER CONFIRMA-
TION OF ITS AUTHENTICITY.

THE Gospel, which was to be announced to all nations, had for its witnesses, Jews, Greeks, and Romans. As it was to destroy the idolatrous worship of the Pagans, so was it to render the ceremonies of the Jewish religion of no avail.

We all see, that its salutary doctrines meet with much opposition, in these our days, from infidelity and irreligion; and it cannot be doubted but that in those ages of darkness and idolatry, of neglect of "the weightier matters of the law," Christianity had to contend with the most inveterate prejudices of the human heart, and the most violent hatred of all ranks of men, both Jew and Gentile; yet none of all this was capable of arresting its progress. It has, we see, from the first opening of the word at Jerusalem, spread itself as a clear and powerful stream, increasing in strength and magnitude as it rolled onwards, and refreshing every land through which it directed its course, occasionally

interrupted, it is true, by the corruption of false doctrines, which would gather about it, and which for a space might narrow its boundaries, and obstruct its waves; but never having been materially impeded in its progress, never diverted from its original channel or deprived of its chrysaline brightness.

Thus has the silver stream of the Gospel passed on from age to age; and when persecution, false professors, and doctrines of devils have decreased its followers, it has, like the swelling river, which, when held back by embankments, gains additional force, by the very opposition which is offered to its course, rushed forth with increased majesty and power. The blood of the martyrs has been seed, which has brought forth a hundred fold; and every persecution has in like proportion given an increase of the true church to "the Lord of the vineyard." The everlasting Gospel has rolled majestically on through many centuries, extending the wide channel in which its boundless mercies flow to many a parched and thirsty land; carrying refreshment to the weary, giving the waters of life freely to all those who thirst for the kingdom of God, and fertilizing the sterile and unyielding soil of the human heart, producing, in all who partake of its refreshing influence, "fruits meet for repentance." And so shall it continue to extend its benign effects till the "earth shall be full

of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea *," and till time shall be swallowed up in eternity. If we were at a loss for any other proofs, the firm establishment, and the increase of Christianity, would of itself be a reason, and a very sufficient reason, to establish the Divine truth of its doctrines.

The Evangelists were not ignorant that the followers of the crucified Jesus would meet with opposition: they knew, from the words of their Master himself, that they had to encounter persecution and reproach; they were aware that they might be called on to suffer death for his sake. They knew that a world lying in sin would deny the veracity of their accounts, and they felt the consequences of falsehood; they knew the value of truth too well to deviate from it in their relations. It was a difficult enterprise to teach men to adore a crucified Saviour, and to sustain in the face of an unbelieving world, such facts as his resurrection and ascension.

Those holy men tell us, that they witnessed the miracles of Jesus before his crucifixion; that he arose from the dead on the third day, and appeared to them repeatedly, and that they saw him ascend into heaven. All this they might have related as impostors, if they had stopped there:

* Isai. xi. 9.

but these men sealed their testimony with their blood; they died by cruel and ignominious deaths, with the Gospel upon their lips. "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit *," were the last words of the first Christian martyr, Stephen. But let us consider attentively the mode of their relations. They tell us of miracles performed in the face of thousands; that the death of their Lord took place in the presence of the whole Jewish people; and that all who believed, bore witness to his resurrection. Is this like a tale which had its origin only in the brain of the writer? Let us remember that many of those who shared in the blessings of his miraculous power, or of those who assisted at his death, and gloried in his sufferings, many of those who deridingly triumphed over his agony on the cross, as well as the witnesses of his resurrection and ascension, must have been in being at the time when the Gospels made their appearance. Is it to be believed, that these men, even if they had no regard for the intrinsic value of truth, would have exposed themselves to so easy a refutation; that they would have run the certain risk of contradiction from such a host of living witnesses? For even if we can imagine that the disciples of Jesus would readily have assisted in the promulgation of the tale, yet we cannot sup-

* Acts vii. 59.

pose that the Roman governor and the whole Jewish nation would have suffered themselves, without reply, to be stigmatised with such cruelty, if the history of our Lord's sufferings had been altogether a fabrication. But we must leave this part of the argument, and proceed to examine some of those circumstances which we call monuments or memorials, and which are among the incontestible proofs of the truth of the Gospel.

Here we must bear in mind what has been already said with regard to the time at which each Gospel first made its appearance; remembering that St. John's Gospel certainly was not published until above thirty years after the resurrection of our Lord.

St. Matthew relates the massacre of the children of Bethlehem by order of Herod. This unexampled act of cruelty could never have been effaced from the memories of those who witnessed it. Can we suppose the Apostle daring enough to have asserted this, if it really had its origin only in his own mind, when we cannot avoid seeing how easily he might have been contradicted? It is impossible that any one blessed with the free exercise of reason could give credit to such an absurdity!

Some, perhaps, may say, that the Gospel was not known to the unbelieving Jews. It is difficult to give any credence to this conjecture: Christi-

tianity had attracted too much attention for us to imagine any such thing : no one can believe that the enemies of Jesus, after all their malice and persecution, would have remained in ignorance of what his followers might relate of him. It is much more easy to suppose that they eagerly searched for any of the writings of the Christians, with a view to confute them. But we will allow for a moment that the Gospel did for a long time remain unknown to those Jews who rejected Christ : it was at least, we must allow, communicated to those of that nation who received Him as their Messiah, and to the Gentiles who were converted to Christianity. These people were many of them depositories of the wonderful facts belonging to our Lord's mission, and the others must naturally have been most anxious to discover whether the relations of the Apostles were to be fully relied on ; and had they found errors in their statements, they would with more readiness have rejected the Gospel than they embraced it. Another circumstance for our consideration is the recital of what occurred to Zecharias, on his doubting the vision of the angel, who foretold the birth of John the Baptist. The messenger of our Lord was too celebrated a character among the Jews for any thing in connection with him to have passed unnoticed : many of those who had listened to his preaching, witnessed the austerity of his life, and

shed tears at his death, were, we know, in existence when the Gospels were first put into circulation; and they too could, and would, there is no doubt, have contradicted the Evangelists, if they had made statements inconsistent with the truth. Thus, the life of John, his preaching, the witness which he bore to Jesus,—“Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world;” the baptism which he administered; and finally his violent death, are all monuments of the truth of the whole. When we reflect on the multiplicity of miracles which they tell us Jesus did; that he healed the sick, opened the eyes of the blind, made the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak; that he turned water into wine; fed multitudes from a few small loaves and a couple of fishes; that he cast out devils, and by one word stilled the troubled waters of the angry deep; and, finally, that he raised the dead by a single command; we naturally ask ourselves, what could have induced these men to write all this, if they had not truth for their guide? Their recitals brought them no worldly advantage; they produced them neither honour nor emolument; they obtained for them nothing but reproach and persecution: and when they wrote, there were those in being who could have given them an unhesitating contradiction, if their statements had been false. The widow’s son at Nain; the daughter of

Jairus ; Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary ; would all these have suffered the world to be so imposed on, if their resurrections had been no more than fictions of the Apostles ? Had it not been true that they had been rescued from death by the Lord of life and glory, would they not, some of them, have given a flat denial to such assertions ? Thus in the miracles of our Lord we find a lasting monument of the truth of the New Testament.

The Evangelists teach us, that the traitor Judas having carried back the price of his treachery, the Jews dared not return into the treasury money, which had been paid for the purchase of blood : so we are informed, that they bought with the thirty pieces of silver the potter's field to bury strangers in ; " wherefore," says the Evangelist, " it is called the field of blood unto this day *."

This is an authentic monument of the whole.—In history no facts are better established : nor are there any more easily refuted, if false, than those of persons suffering death under sentence of the law, whether justly or unjustly. Jesus was condemned by the whole council of the Jews ; and by the fiat of the Roman governor he was publicly crucified. Profane history speaks of him as a remarkable person who suffered in this manner. His condemnation then is an incontestable fact.

* Matt. xxvii. 8.

The Evangelists relate, that darkness was over the whole land, from the sixth to the ninth hour; that the veil of the temple was rent in twain, and the earth was shaken, and the rocks riven; while many bodies of saints which slept arose, and appeared unto many. These circumstances were too surprising in their nature for the remembrance of them to have been lost when the Apostles wrote. Thus the death of Jesus, with its accompanying circumstances, is a most satisfactory monument of the authenticity of the whole history.

To these we may add the memorials which our Lord has left us of his life and death, by the institution of the sacrament of Baptism, and that of the holy Eucharist; both of which ceremonies Christians indisputably have celebrated in all ages of the church; in its days of adversity as well as of prosperity; and none among them have disputed their Divine institution.

We will now pass on to the commencement of Christianity in the establishment of the first church. In this we find enough to attract our most special attention, and to refute every argument of the unbeliever, without seeking for any other proof. Behold those ignorant and unlettered Galileans, preaching with energy and the most astonishing effect, in every known language of the world, CHRIST CRUCIFIED. View them holding up to the Jews, as their Saviour, that very Jesus whom

they had, so short a time before unjustly put to death.

St. Luke relates to us in the Acts, that at that time three thousand conversions took place from among the Jews. In these first Christians, then, we have three thousand monuments of the truth of the account. This first church, candour must allow, forms a chain of proofs, and produces a host of witnesses sufficient to sustain the truth of the Gospel against all attacks. We are not to argue against Christianity, because the haughty governors and leaders of the people refused to receive it. We are not to deny the truth of the Gospel, because the Scribes and Pharisees rejected it. We must remember, that it was these men, who had put our Lord to death, through their hatred and envy: they would be, we may be sure, the last who would publicly acknowledge the enormous crime of which they had been guilty, even if they had felt convinced; but it is to be observed, that they, having rejected the Lord of glory, were given up to the iniquity and natural hardness of their hearts, and consequently did all in their power to persecute the first Christians, till it pleased Him whom they had rejected and slain, to stop their career, in destroying their city, and bringing desolation on the whole nation, by the Roman arms. The conversion of St. Paul is another monument of the Divine truth of the New Testament,

and for many years he continued a living witness for Christianity.

Thus, fact upon fact rushes forth with overwhelming power for the establishment of the revealed word of God. If we were to bring forward all the proofs, which we could discover for the subversion of infidelity, this volume would be carried to a length which in some measure would defeat the purpose we have in view,—namely, to produce the most weighty reasons for the truth of holy writ in such a shape that they may find a ready perusal from those, whose time is too variously or incessantly occupied to permit them to enter into deep study or lengthened argument.

The first Christians must indeed have been men who had lost the possession of right reason, if they had been nothing more than impostors ; for what did their faith expose them to, but sorrow, persecution, and death ? The Gospel promises, it is true, a blessed resurrection, and great enjoyment in eternity,—“an exceeding weight of glory :” but if the Evangelists were the propagators of falsehood, —if the primitive Christians consented to the religion of an impostor,—this hope of a glorious eternity was, to them, without foundation ; and out of their own writings they must have been condemned,—for in every doctrine which they taught, they set forth the necessity of an entire change of heart and renewal of spirit, through the workings

of the Holy Ghost, which would necessarily produce in the followers of the blessed Jesus, the fruit of good works, through a saving faith in His all-atoning blood: consequently, if they really were guilty of imposture, if they sanctioned untruth only in one instance, if they were either by their words or actions countenancing falsehood, they were contradicting their own precepts; and neither the propagators nor the participators in the fraud could be partakers of those promises which they held out as the word of that God who was to be worshipped "in spirit and in truth,"—and which promises they, in fact, only drew from the veil of obscurity in which they were shadowed by Moses and the Prophets.

Now as we have proved the Old Testament to be the revealed word of God, it amounts to a demonstration, that if Jesus was an impostor, if his history is a fabrication, the Evangelists were sealing their own condemnation by the word of that Jehovah on whose prophecies they pretended to rely, and whose laws they affected to revere. Thus we can produce another strong proof of the authenticity of the New Testament, by the very nature of what it contains. I do not see how those who profess to doubt the history of Jesus, as the Evangelists relate it, can give any credence at all to profane history; for certainly the New Testament contains within itself more demonstrative

proof of its truth than any other history in the world.

It is then the grossest injustice to believe either a Grecian, a Roman, or any history, and deny the truth of the Gospel: for it contains another striking proof, of which profane history cannot boast; at least, if at all, not in the same perfection; which is, that all its truths are so closely linked together that it is impossible to separate them. The facts contained in the four Gospels form a curious chain of the most perfect workmanship; and they produce demonstrations, they find grounds for arguments, which neither the sophistry nor the objections of unbelievers can weaken, destroy, or overturn. Thus, then, fair dealing obliges us to admit, that if we allow any other history to be true, we must be compelled to acknowledge the Divine authority of the Gospel.

CHAPTER X.

OF THE MIRACLES OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR
JESUS CHRIST.

A MIRACLE must be allowed to be a convincing demonstration of an especial exercise of Divine authority; because that which we distinguish by the name of a miracle, is an effect beyond the operation of what we are accustomed to call natural causes. It is some extraordinary circumstance which surpasses the art or wisdom of any created being to calculate upon or produce, and must consequently take place by virtue of the immediate interference of the Creator himself, by a wonderful interposition of his almighty power, for some express purpose of his sovereign will.

We find from holy writ, that the infinite wisdom of God has seen fit to exert itself in this way repeatedly, for the confirmation of some extraordinary facts, which human reason might otherwise have been inclined to resist, or perhaps never would have paid any attention to, unassisted by such miraculous and surprising circumstances. This truth will be confirmed to us by searching in

the sacred volume for the history of the various miracles there recorded. If, on examination, we can resist these extraordinary proofs of the manifestation of the power of God ; if we can, while we are obliged to admit the facts themselves, divest them of their Divine origin, and fine them down to merely some remarkable effects of causes, upon which man could calculate, and even controul with some degree of certainty ; let us tremble lest we bring on ourselves the condemnation of the blaspheming Pharisees, who accused our Lord of working his miracles through the power of Beelzebub. When God sent Moses to conduct the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage, he was allowed to work miracles to establish the truth of his mission ; to convince them that he acted by Divine authority ; to teach the Egyptians the power of that God whose people they held in slavery ; and to induce them the more readily to let them go, while they were compelled to acknowledge the Jehovah of the Israelites to be the Lord of heaven and earth.

If we attentively follow the history of the Jewish people, we shall find a succession of miracles employed at various times to bring them back to their duty, to convince them of the power of God, or to punish them for their disobedience and rebellion. It is unnecessary here for us to trace these wonderful facts ; the Bible will discover to

us, that not only Moses but the Prophets were permitted to exercise a power of this kind. If, then, these holy men were allowed to work so many miracles ; it was quite consistent, and only proper, that the Son of God, while dwelling amongst men, should display his Divine nature in this way, that he might be distinguished from all others, by the power, the nature, and number of his wonderful acts.

When we examine the miracles of our Lord, we find, first, That they infinitely surpassed in number all those of Moses and the Prophets put together : secondly, That they not only were more numerous, but that their nature placed them much above the others. The miracles, which were worked under the Jewish dispensation, were usually employed for the destruction of the enemies of Israel, or to punish the rebellion of these stiffnecked people themselves. Those of Jesus expanded themselves in blessings on all those, who implored his assistance. Moses acted as a severe judge, whose duty it was to punish the guilty ; our Lord as a merciful Saviour, whose occupation was to comfort the afflicted.

Moses and the Prophets worked their miracles in the name and by the authority of Jehovah. Jesus performed his, in his own power, as God manifest in the flesh. All nature was obedient to his Almighty word. The whole universe listened

attentively to his voice. Devils came tremblingly forth at his command ; the sea was still when he spake ; and death himself let loose his prey, at the bidding of Him in whose gift is the breath of life. It is impossible to doubt the truth of these miracles, not only for reasons which we have before given, in our various arguments in this volume, on the certainty of revelation generally, but because the miracles, which the Apostles afterwards performed in the name of Jesus, were invincible attestations of the truth of those wrought by himself while on earth.

Our Lord teaches us that his miracles are to be considered as proofs of his Divine mission, such as cannot be contradicted or denied ; and such as those, who witnessed them, could not reject without criminality. He says, " If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin : but now they have no cloke for their sin. He that hateth me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin : but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father *."

In another place, when the Jews reproached him for bearing witness of himself, he replied, " But I have greater witness than that of John : for the works which the Father hath given me to

* John xv. 22—24.

finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me *.” Our Lord’s answer to the disciples of John, is another argument which cannot be contradicted, that his miracles established the certainty of his Divine power. “Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me †.”

We cannot read the Gospels without observing the effect produced by these miracles. How frequently are we told by the Apostles, that the people marvelled at them, or that many believed! The Samaritan woman exclaimed to her countrymen, “Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did ‡.” St. Luke tells us, that when Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, that “they were all amazed at the mighty power of God.” And St. John informs us, that Nicodemus told our Lord, that his miracles proved him to be a teacher come from God. “Rabbi,” said he, “we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him §.” We have

* John v. 36.

† Matt. xi. 4—6.

‡ John iv. 29.

§. John iii. 2.

indeed abundant proof of this sort; for the Evangelists scarcely ever give us an account of one miracle, without adding, that many of those who saw believed. This same observation will hold good also with regard to the miracles which the Apostles did after our Lord's ascension.

...The power of working miracles in the name of Jesus, was abundantly dispensed to the church, in the earliest ages of Christianity; that is to say, during the lives of the Apostles, and their immediate followers, those who had received from them the especial gift of the Holy Ghost, by laying on of hands. Thus we see that the third generation of Christians carried within itself many witnesses of the truth of those miracles done in the name of our Lord, which were a fulfilment of his promise immediately before his ascension. "And these signs shall follow them that believe. In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover*."

Thus there could be no difficulty in the early days of Christianity, in obtaining the most faithful information on all these important truths. It must have been easy, we are sure, to have learnt

* Mark xvi. 17, 18.

every particular regarding them. As the profession of Christianity drew on its followers the most bitter persecutions, it is not possible to believe that men of that, or of any other age, would have been so insensible to suffering ; such enemies to their own peace and safety, as unnecessarily to have exposed themselves to all the malice of the unbelieving Jews and idolatrous Gentiles, without the clearest and most convincing proofs that the Gospel for which they were ready to suffer pain, reproach, bonds, and imprisonment, and even death itself, was indeed the word of God.

Soon after the establishment of Christianity, the power of working miracles was withdrawn from amongst men ; Infinite Wisdom seeing it no longer necessary to display in that manner the truth of the Gospel. According to the received custom of all ages, when the truth of any fact has been established by indisputable authority, when it has been satisfactorily proved by a weight of demonstrative evidence, it remains for ever fixed and immutable, without any necessity for a repetition of those extraordinary circumstances which might at first have attended its disclosure. This is the way in which we reason with regard to the affairs of this life ; and shall we treat the glorious truths of the Eternal with less justice than we do recitals of the actions of his creatures ?

Those, who in these days desire a repetition of

miracles, ought to examine such a wish before they ask so unreasonable a thing; they ought seriously to reflect on the nature of such a request. Let them remember by these dissatisfied thoughts, even if they amount to no more than thoughts, they are saying, “ *I will not believe in God: I will reject what the Bible relates, because I was not an eye-witness to the wonders recorded in it. I consider my reason as deceitful, inasmuch as it leads me to determine in favour of revelation. I assert, in contradiction to every principle of common sense, that the excellence, the holiness, and purity, which are disclosed in the Bible, are nothing more than the productions of the human mind;—that the predictions recorded in holy writ, which are proved to me by profane history to have been accomplished, and of which I myself behold the fulfilment in the dispersion of the Jewish people, and in the progress of Christianity, are, both in their utterance and accomplishment, the mere work of chance;—that the miracles said to be performed by Moses and the Prophets, by Jesus and the Apostles, in the presence of such numberless witnesses, are neither more nor less than falsehoods and impostures; in the first of which all the Jewish people, and in the second the whole Christian church, with every one of its martyrs, from age to age, have been willing and zealous accomplices.*’

Divine truth, bright as it is, will not fail to re-

ceive additional lustre from the reflection, that unbelief constantly involves its votaries in such absurdities as these ; while the strait-forward path, in which the believer may walk, is at once perfect as well as plain.

We have shewn that it is not for want of sufficient proof that we find, in this our day, the blaspheming atheist, the careless unbeliever, and the debauched infidel. The first is carried away by the pride of human intellect : the most fatal and destructive of all opposers is he, both to himself and to others. The second endangers his soul by indifference and neglect ; like Gallio, he careth for none of these things : while the third is wrapped up in the enjoyment of the most sinful gratifications ; and being blinded by his impious pleasures, he cannot see the light, and does not comprehend the value of Divine truth. To all these descriptions of persons, religion would be indeed both inconvenient and irksome. The first it would humble ; and humility is a garb he knows not how to wear. The second it would disturb ; and as he is always ready to say with the sluggard, “ a little more sleep,” it would not suit his palate. The third it would absolutely enchain ; for if he received the Bible as true, he would no longer be free to follow the evil imaginations of his own heart.

Thus we see, that the real cause of opposition to the revealed word of God is not to be discovered

in the Bible itself, but is to be found in the life, the actions, and inclinations of the revilers of God's word.

Such incredulity, such impiety, far from shaking our faith, ought to discover to us a powerful reason for endeavouring, by prayer and meditation on the Divine truths which the Bible contains, to establish them more firmly in our minds; it ought to lead us frequently to search the Scriptures, saying from the inmost recesses of our hearts, " Lord, I believe: help thou mine unbelief*."

* Mark ix. 24.

CHAPTER XI.

ON THE PROGRESS OF THE GOSPEL.

WHEN we seriously reflect on the commencement of that Gospel, which now spreads its glories over so many nations ;—when we attentively read, that Jesus chose his disciples from among the humblest classes of society ; and when we remember that these men were selected for the express purpose of making known to the world the greatest work, which has ever been attempted since the creation ;—when we consider the difficulties to be overcome, and the instruments which were to be used in the establishment of Christianity, we can be no other than convinced that the enterprize must have been of God, or its success would have been altogether impossible.

If Jesus Christ had appeared among a people without any form of government, or system of religion, as far as human calculation goes, there might have been a probability of success, in an attempt to instruct them : for we all know that the guidance of a mind which has been perfectly untaught, is much more easy than it is to dissipate the preju-

dices engrafted on the understanding by education or custom ; prejudices too, which bore the appearance of truth, as was the case with the Jews at our Saviour's approach. Their religion, it is true, had its foundation in the Law of Moses ; but it was so clouded by fabulous records, and by superstitious traditions, that, in their worship, only the form of godliness remained : the power was entirely extinct.

Vital religion dwelt in the hearts of a few in Judea. It is true the Lord had still a remnant left among his once chosen people ; and this remnant, we know, heard not in vain the preaching of the Gospel : they accepted with joy the crucified Jesus, as the promised Messiah ; but how small were their number in comparison to the great body of the Jewish nation !

Let us turn from Judea, to the Gentile world, and see whether that presented a more favourable field for the reception of Christianity. The Jews had the possession of the oracles of God, and could search the Scriptures if they would ; but the heathen world were indeed the " people who sat in darkness." They were given up to the grossest idolatry, not only bowing down to graven and molten images, but performing the most revolting rites to propitiate their deities. In this picture we have only a faint description of the state in

which both Jew and Gentile were, when the “ Sun of Righteousness ” arose.

When we reflect on the doctrines proposed by our Lord, our surprize would indeed redouble, did we not feel within us the force of that Divine truth which every precept of the Gospel displays to us. Had he condescended to appear in celestial glory, accompanied by a host of angels, declaring himself to be the supreme Lord of all, the pride of both Jew and Gentile would have enabled them easily to yield to his sway. But behold the lowly Jesus taking upon himself an humble occupation, and subjecting himself to all our weaknesses, though completely free from the smallest semblance of one of our sins ;—though God, yet becoming man, and voluntarily submitting himself unto death, the death of the cross for us. And see the handful of men to whom he gave the commission, “ Go ye, teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,” laying the foundation of that church which never has been destroyed, but which, on the contrary, continues to gather strength, and spread itself over every nation, though so many ages have elapsed since its establishment.

This attempt, we must allow, was either that of enthusiasm, or it was the confidence of Divine truth. Its success has declared it to be the latter :

it has proved to us that it was the arm of Jehovah alone which upheld the work.

Idolatry accommodated itself to the most criminal excesses to which the unrestrained passions of human nature will lead : every crime, even of the deepest die, had its patron deity. The Gospel at its first onset declared an uncompromising opposition, not only to the idols of the heathens, but also to their vices. An enemy to the one no less than to the other, it required purity of life, as well as renunciation of Paganism. It not only insisted on the worship of the true God in his temple, but on love and fear of him in the heart. It was not merely a new religion which the Apostles taught, but a new nature which they enjoined.

“ Ye must be born again *,” was the doctrine which they had received from their Divine Master. “ If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature †.” “ Created in Christ Jesus unto good works ‡,” was St. Paul’s enforcement of that precept ; while St. James emphatically called on the followers of the Gospel, “ Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves §.”

If the Jews had fewer obstacles to oppose to the reception of the Gospel than the heathen world, we see, alas ! that those have been more

* John iii. 7.

† 2 Cor. v. 17.

‡ Eph. ii. 10.

§ James i. 22.

difficult to overcome; for we know that the former have been far more obstinate in their rejection of it, than the latter. The Prophets had plainly foretold to the Jews that very Messiah, whom the Apostles preached in the person of Jesus, yet *hearing they did not understand*; and though they had witnessed his miracles, *seeing they did not see*. They possessed, it is true, the sacred Scriptures. These valuable prerogatives, these singular advantages, only served to increase their pride and unbelief. The Messiah had been expressly promised to proceed from their nation, and the Gospel declared that they had crucified that Messiah. They expected a conquering hero, who would deliver them from the power of Rome with mighty wonders, as Moses had before done, when they were under the yoke of servitude in Egypt; the Gospel proposed to them a Saviour in humility and suffering, “despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,” who offered them deliverance from the bondage of sin, and the power of death. Their imaginations were filled with victory over their enemies, and submission to a crowned and triumphant ruler: the Gospel led them to a conquest over themselves, with the acceptance of a despised and crucified Master. Their hearts were set on earthly possessions: the Gospel preached the value of heavenly treasures. They were to relinquish the traditions

of the rabbies, and listen to the preaching of the humblest of the people; they were called on to abandon the blood of goats and rams, and seek a propitiation for sin in the blood of the Lamb of God.

Indeed, when I behold Jesus of Nazareth, the reputed Son of a poor carpenter, undertaking to surmount so many difficulties; when I read of his selecting his disciples from among the lowly and unlearned; when I see him committing to them the important work of the spiritual conquest of the world, a world given up to idolatry and unbelief;—when I attentively consider all these things, and when I remember the success which has crowned the whole, I find, in that fact alone, a proof sufficient to establish the Divine authenticity of the Gospel; I feel it impossible to reject it, even though no one other argument could be brought forward to sustain it. But we know that we need not rest here: we have given numberless proofs independent of this already; and we have yet another circumstance which carries sufficient weight with it to be of itself conclusive.

It is not impossible, we can easily imagine, for a man to bring forward any new doctrine, however absurd, and by his talents, his eloquence, and invention, to impose on some individuals, and to obtain himself followers by his address, by the weight of his presence, or by the acuteness of his arguments. We know that Jesus “spake as

never man spake," and that he rivetted his followers by the power of his miracles : so far the multitudes, who followed him during his sojourn on earth, are not a matter of surprise.

But let us proceed : what our Divine Master performed during his life is nothing in comparison to that which took place after his death. Then, indeed, his prediction of himself, " And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me *," was amply fulfilled. It often happens, that any art or science is better received and more fully understood at some future period than during the life of its first inventor. And that this should be the case is reasonable enough, because the proofs, perhaps, consist in explanations which may be more clearly given, and better sustained by fresh arguments produced by others, in after times. Doctrines purely speculative have not any necessary connection with the persons of their first authors, and their reasonings are frequently strengthened and matured by their disciples. But the fact is quite otherwise as to the Gospel : Jesus Christ is the object of every relation, and the foundation of the whole. His life, his death, and his resurrection, are the very essence of it ; and it is not possible to separate his doctrine from his person. Suppose we for a moment admit,

* John. xii. 32.

that Jesus, by art and eloquence, procured the favour of his followers, and imposed on his disciples by persuading them that he should rise again. It is quite clear, had this been the case, that after his death the imposture would have been made manifest, and consequently his doctrine abandoned.

If we still admit the supposition of fraud, what are we to imagine as the cause which led the disciples to continue it? Was it to raise themselves in the estimation of the world? was it to obtain great possessions? where or how was the honour to be gained? from whence were the riches to be acquired in preaching a crucified Redeemer, who had not on earth a place where to lay his head? Did these men believe in God, or did they deny the existence of a Supreme Being? If they were persuaded of the presence of an Almighty Judge of the actions of men, how could they expect to escape the punishment due to their imposture? If, on the contrary, they said with the fool, "There is no God*," why were they so insensible as to renounce all the enjoyments and the prospects of this world, while they readily subjected themselves to the greatest mortifications and the bitterest persecutions, to the cruellest and most

* Psalm liiii. 1.

lingering deaths, rather than acknowledge their hypocrisy.

We must remember that the followers of Christ were not surprised into any of the evils which they drew on themselves: they were repeatedly warned of them by their heavenly Master, and told by him, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also: but all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me*."

It may happen sometimes that an enterprize is begun without its consequences being fully foreseen; and because it has been commenced, we see it obstinately persisted in: but in the preaching of the Gospel, nothing of this kind appears. The Evangelists inform us, that the disciples of Jesus shamefully abandoned their Lord in the hour of his extremity: but we behold these very men, a short

* John xv. 18, &c.

time afterwards, taking up the cross, and joyfully bearing it even unto death. What produced this wonderful change? what, but the power of Divine truth, displayed in the glory of our Lord's resurrection? They saw him triumphant over the grave, and they witnessed his ascension into heaven, and in him they beheld "the Resurrection and the Life."

These observations, considered attentively, must produce conviction in every thinking mind. The disciples of Jesus deserting him when he was led to judgment, and their subsequent behaviour, their fearless declaration of the truth of the Gospel after his death, are demonstrations of the Divine origin of the New Testament, which defy every attack of infidelity, and destroy every opposition of the unbeliever, while they are also proofs, which he who acknowledges Moses and the Prophets cannot, with any colour of justice, resist.

CHAPTER XII.

FURTHER REMARKS ON THE PROGRESS OF THE
GOSPEL.

IN the history of the commencement of the Christian Church, given us by St. Luke in the Acts of the Apostles, he teaches us, that after the Holy Ghost had descended on the followers of Jesus, three thousand persons were converted by their preaching, and that this remarkable occurrence took place not above fifty days after the resurrection of our Lord.

It is particularly worthy of observation, that this first church was formed *at Jerusalem*, the very place at which our Lord had suffered, where every transaction of his painful and ignominious death and his glorious resurrection had occurred. Had not the first Christians openly declared their faith till they were at a distance from the capital of Judea, infidelity might have thus obtained arms against the Gospel : and unbelievers perhaps might have attempted to say, that a few followers of Christ had imposed on a set of ignorant people ; a tale, which, at such a distance from Jerusalem,

they could not contradict. But behold the disciples of our Lord publicly calling on all to believe on him as the Christ, and that, in the very town where, a few weeks before, he had been put to an open shame. Hear them addressing themselves to those who had consented to his death in such terms as these, "Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know; him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain*."

The Apostles not only preached Jesus thus openly at Jerusalem, but we must not forget one principal figure in the group,—they did it *immediately* after his ascension. They did not wait until death had removed some of the witnesses of the extraordinary facts attending our Lord's humiliation; till time had effaced them from the memories of others: nor did they tarry till the fury of his murderers had in some degree subsided; but, fearless of the consequences, they openly announced, that the Son of God, in the person of the lowly Jesus, had been crucified, and they

* Acts ii. 22, 23.

called upon all to accept him as their Redeemer, if they valued their salvation.

The Apostles did many miracles in the name, and by the power of Him whom they preached : and we find that, in a short space, eight thousand of those who had joined in the cry of " Crucify him, crucify him !" were among those who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ. I would ask, is there any appearance of fraud here ? Now this first church was so intimately connected with all the others, and we are so distinctly led back to it, step by step, in the most received histories, that it at once destroys the assertion made by infidelity, that there were no Christians in those ages which immediately succeeded the crucifixion.

Neither shall we be able to find any trait of imposture in the miracles which the Apostles performed : they were too celebrated, too public, and too numerous to be suspected either of fraud or falsehood.

These miracles were performed in the face of the whole synagogue. The Scribes and Pharisees had been too active in the condemnation of our Lord to let them pass unnoticed : we may be assured that they were scrutinized with the most pointed attention, and with all the precaution which the malice of their hearts could suggest. Can we then doubt, that, if they had discovered

the slightest circumstance to which they could attach a suspicion of fraud on the part of the Apostles, they would triumphantly have exposed it to the people? And the consequence of this must have been, that the Gospel would have been rejected and its preachers abandoned to contempt.

The second observation which we are led to make on the first preachers of Christianity is, that the circumstance of the Jews being among the earliest converts, is worthy of the wisdom of God; for it was most fit that our Lord should be glorified and worshipped where he had for our sakes been insulted and murdered: it was consistent that his name should be honoured by some of those very persons, who had called for his crucifixion; that his exaltation should be acknowledged by those, who had gloried in his humiliation.

This would not have been carried into effect if only the Gentiles had formed the first Christian church. Our Lord had been unknown to them while engaged in his ministry: his preaching, as well as his sufferings, had been confined to Judea. It was fit then that the Jews who denied him should be the first to confess him.

Some have asked, why did not Jesus appear, after his resurrection, to the whole Jewish nation, priests and people, Scribes and Pharisees? I reply, that sufficient witness was given them of

the fact to have left them without excuse. He was seen of the soldiers, who watched at the sepulchre, and who were alarmed even to stupefaction at the earthquake and vision of angels. They disclosed the scene and their terrors to the High Priest and the governors of the people ; and were ordered, or prevailed on by bribes, to say publicly, that the disciples had stolen his body while they slept. Here we have an evidence of our Lord's resurrection, from the mouth of his enemies themselves, in their caution and directions to the soldiers to conceal these wonderful facts by falsehood : and it is also an admission, that in reality they believed it themselves, though they were wicked enough to endeavour in this manner to stifle its promulgation.

For all the purposes of Christianity, it was quite enough that our Lord deigned to appear to his Apostles, and to others of his disciples, at various times, during the space of forty days. Whether to few or to many, the fact of his appearance is the same.—It was for their comfort, and the establishment of their faith that he did so. With regard to his persecutors, even if an appearance of our Lord had been vouchsafed to them, it is by no means certain that it would have been instrumental to their conversion. We may draw this conclusion from our Saviour's parable of Dives and Lazarus : and that this is more than probable, we

have strong presumptive evidence, by their behaviour towards the Roman guard. If they could bribe them to silence, no doubt they would have found some means of stifling their own convictions; even if our Lord himself had deigned to stand before them, and had even displayed to them the wounds inflicted on his precious body by their cruelty.

The church at Jerusalem was not permitted to remain long at peace. These first followers of the Gospel were persecuted and dispersed in every direction : but this very persecution and dispersion was, under Providence, a means of conversion to many : this scattered flock spread the name of Jesus far and wide. The Gospel was quickly preached in Samaria ; and St. Peter was sent to carry the Christian faith to the house of Cornelius the centurion. But the chief Apostle to the Gentiles was St. Paul. Of St. Paul we may truly say, that his journeys and sufferings, and, above all, his writings, are lasting memorials of the truth of Christianity. Sacred history makes it clear that there were many Christian churches at the time of the Emperor Claude, and within a few years after the resurrection of our Lord. Of these, the church at Antioch was the most celebrated ; and at that place it was that the disciples were first called *Christians*. That in the course of a few years from this time, Christianity spread itself rapidly, is

a fact that no one, at all versed in profane history, will attempt to deny.—We have not space to dwell more at length on the progress of the Gospel, nor on the sufferings of Christians in all ages. We have shewn that the Christian church had its rise in Jerusalem, immediately after the death of our Lord : and we have proved the Divine origin of the New Testament by the resurrection of its Founder, by the miracles performed through the power of his own word, and by his followers in his name. We have also shewn its truth, by the monuments and memorials with which it furnishes us, and by its wonderful extension in spite of all opposition. It now remains for us, in the next and last chapter, to draw one more very strong argument in favour of holy writ, by considering the predictions of the Prophets, as well as those of our Lord, respecting the calling of the Gentiles.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PREDICTIONS OF THE PROPHETS, AND
THOSE OF JESUS CHRIST, TOUCHING THE
CONVERSION OF THE GENTILE WORLD,—A
FURTHER CONFIRMATION OF THE TRUTH
OF HOLY WRIT.

WE have reserved the consideration of the prophecies of the Old and New Testament, respecting the calling of the Gentiles, for the last chapter of this volume, because the subject adds considerable weight to every argument which we have brought forward in support of both ; and may be considered as setting a seal on the whole of the sacred records. After having produced demonstration on demonstration, in support of the Old Testament, we have shewn that the doctrines taught in the new are true and divine, by their superiority over those of Moses. We have proved that the worship, which the Evangelists inculcate, is of a more exalted nature than that of the Mosaic dispensation. We have, by the life of the holy Jesus, shewn him to have been far above any of the Prophets. We have proved his miracles to be superior,

both in number and power, to those recorded in the Old Testament ;—and we have, by his death and resurrection, demonstrated beyond all opposition, the Divinity of his mission : while, by the arguments drawn from the establishment of the Christian church in the first ages, we have displayed the power of the glorious truth of the Gospel surmounting every obstacle. We have called the attention of our readers to the crucified Jesus of Nazareth, destroying with a handful of followers, the splendour of Idol worship. We have beheld the Apostles engaging idolaters to embrace a religion which brought on its advocates hatred and contempt, persecution and suffering, and, not unfrequently, imprisonment and death. But the circumstance which must even still further claim our admiration is, that this very success had been foretold for ages by the Prophets, as well as by our Lord himself, during his ministry.

The Old Testament abounds with an infinity of distinct predictions on this subject. There is scarcely one among the Prophets who has not alluded to it ; and we do not find that they have done so only in vague and ambiguous terms, but in express declarations, which are clear, precise, and circumstantial. In their writings, they teach mankind by what means the infidel nations shall be converted to God, and who shall be the author of the blessed work : they name the period of this

conversion, and from whence the benefit shall arise.

David certainly alludes to this, in the expressions which so often occur in his Psalms of thanksgiving; such as, "O praise the Lord, *all ye nations*: praise him, all ye people*." "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing†." Isaiah contains many clear and distinct prophecies on the subject. In the second chapter of this Prophet, we discover a full prediction respecting the establishment of the Messiah, and the conversion of the Gentiles. "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem‡." In the xlixth chapter of the same Prophet, he says, "I will give thee for a light to lighten the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth. In the livth chapter we find the Prophet, for the

* Psalm cxvii.

† Psalm c.

‡ Isai. ii. 2, 3.

comfort of all nations, predicting the amplitude of the church. The lvth chapter opens with that beautiful invitation which is general to all the world; which is neither confined to people nor country, nation nor language. "Ho, EVERY ONE that thirsteth," &c. In the lxxth of the same Prophet, the prediction appears in another shape: "I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name." In the last chapter, we find the same Prophet even declaring more powerfully the certainty of God's gracious promises to the heathen world: "It shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory*." "And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord†." If we had space, we might extract many more remarkable passages on the same subject from this Prophet, but we must turn to Jeremiah: and in the third chapter this striking prophecy presents itself to our view; "At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagi-

* Isai. lxvi. 18.

† Isai. lxvi. 23.

nation of their evil heart *.” Amos uttered a prediction, which appeared to allude not only to the coming of the Messiah, and the calling of the Gentiles, but also to the restoration of the Jews. And in doing so, he is not singular ; for many of the prophecies may be taken in this sense likewise. In fact, the same interpretation is applicable to our quotations from the lxvith of Isaiah. “ In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof ; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old : that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the Lord that doeth this †.”

Zechariah furnishes us with the following example : “ And many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people : and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto thee ‡.”

Malachi, in his first chapter, displays to us God’s purpose of the calling of the heathen world, in the following distinct terms : “ For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles ; and in every place incense shall be offered unto

* Jer. iii. 17.

† Amos ix. 11, 12.

‡ Zech. ii. 11.

my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts *." This passage is so clear, that even the Jews themselves are obliged to admit, that it cannot be interpreted in any other sense, than in allusion to the calling of the heathen world; and when we compare it with our Lord's answer to the Samaritan woman, we shall find in them an agreement, which, if it were possible, adds a weight to both; which produces in each, from the reflection of the other, the light of Divine truth in so strong a manner, that the most impious unbeliever dare not resist its brightness. Our Lord says, " Believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him †." The extension of the kingdom of Christ, has shewn us the actual fulfilment of this prophecy.

The Old Testament contains many other predictions, both relating to the calling of the Gentiles and the final restoration and conversion of the Jews: we have not space here to quote

* Mal. i. 11.

† John iv. 21—22.

them*. However, we cannot omit the following remarkable passage, from the twelfth chapter of Zechariah, at the 10th verse: "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced; and they shall mourn for him as one

* We refer those of our readers, who are desirous of searching into prophecy in a spirit of pious inquiry, for some of the most remarkable of the predictions respecting the final restoration and conversion of the Jewish nation, to the xxxth of Deut., the 1st, xi th, xiv th, xxvii th, liv th, lx th, lxist, lxii d, lxvi th of Isaiah; to the xxxth and xxxist of Jeremiah; to the xith, xx th, xxxiv th, xxxvi th, and xxxvii th of Ezekiel; to the 1st and iid of Hosea, and to the ix th of Amos, together with the viii th and xi th of Zechariah. The attentive reader will discover in many of the verses of some of these chapters, and in the whole of others, passages which appear to me to be distinct allusions to the ingathering of Israel. These are not, I am aware, the only places in Scripture where the restoration of the Jews is alluded to; but in selecting the above passages, I have been guided by the wish of giving the reader a general idea on the subject; acknowledging myself much more fit to be taught than to teach with regard to it—not having been able to derive any assistance from the French of M. Jaquelot for what I here advance. Should any of my readers be desirous of further information on this head, I beg to call their attention to Three Discourses, with Notes, on the important and interesting Subject of Christian Missions to the Jewish People, by my Brother, the Rev. Richard Bingham, Jun., M.A., Curate of Gosport Chapel, and Secretary of the Portsmouth, Portsea, and Gosport Association in aid of the London Society for promoting Christianity among the Jews, published for the author by Seeley and Sons, Fleet Street.

mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for his first born."

We must now take a concise view of some of the predictions which the New Testament contains, relating to the calling of the Gentiles: but we, at the same time, entreat our readers not to be satisfied with the few examples and hasty remarks, which this short treatise affords, but to search in the inspired volume for themselves, on this as on every subject; for it is only in the Scriptures that they can learn to run the race, which is set before them, so as to obtain the prize of their high calling.

In the birth of the Saviour of the world, we find a perfect agreement with all the prophecies respecting him; of which so many proofs are brought forward by the Evangelists in their compositions, that we cannot be at a loss in applying them.

The visit of the Magi, who came from the East to Jerusalem, to worship the infant Jesus, was a prelude to the entrance of the Gentile world into the Christian church; but during our Lord's ministry on earth, we do not find him extending his preaching beyond Judea; and even when he sent his disciples into the cities of Judea, he expressly forbade their entering a Samaritan town. This was in perfect accordance with the ancient prophecies;

for Jesus was to be rejected of the Jews before he was to give light to lighten the Gentiles. Though our Lord, while on earth, never actually preached to the Gentiles, yet, both by parables and prophecies, he fully foretold their conversion.

The Parable of the Prodigal Son, and that of the Labourer who was called into the Vineyard at the eleventh hour, are both predictions of the calling of the Gentiles. The parable of the Marriage Supper relates to this subject also, while it at the same time predicts the rejection of the Jews.

The parable of the Householder, who planted a vineyard, and let it out to husbandmen, affords us a powerful example of these predictions as they regard both Jew and Gentile *. When our Lord had related this parable, the answer of his hearers to the question which he put to them, What the lord of the vineyard would do unto those wicked husbandmen, is a prophecy of the clearest kind as to the acceptance of the Gentiles, and the rejection of the Jews, "He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons †."

And this prediction we find even more fully confirmed in the reply of our Lord to those Jews; "Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone

* Matt. xxi. 33. † Matt. xxi. 41.

which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner : this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes ? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof *."

But it is time to search into the prophecies given by Jesus Christ, in the shape of open declarations. When they marvelled at the faith of the Roman centurion, our Lord said to his disciples, " Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven†." St. John records, that our Lord also said, " Other sheep I have which are not of this fold ; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd‡."

We have abundantly shewn from these examples, both of the Old and New Testament, that the predictions of the Prophets, and those of our Lord, are in perfect accordance with each other, with respect to the calling of the Gentiles ; and have brought forward enough for the establishment of Divine truth, which is incontestibly proved by the fulfilment of these prophecies in so great a measure, by the extension of Christianity, and the rejection of the Jews. Every day the Gospel

* Matt. xxi. 42, 43. † Matt. viii. 11. ‡ John x. 16.

is spreading its influence, and, under our own eyes, accomplishing more perfectly the word of God: the in-gathering of Israel will be its complete fulfilment; and when that will be, when that day of rejoicing will come, is known to Him alone, who dwelleth on high, and who ordereth the unruly wills and affections of sinful men.

We have before brought it forward as an argument, that the dispersed and unconverted Jews are living monuments of the truth of holy writ: and we here *aver* that the Christianised Gentiles are equally unanswerable witnesses for the Divine origin, not only of the New Testament, but of the whole Bible. With this observation, we take leave of our readers, earnestly entreating them, whoever they may be, whether they have taken up this volume in the character of the open infidel, the careless professor, or the pious Christian, to weigh well its contents, to turn to the Holy Bible, to read it daily, to study it deeply, to store their memories with "precept upon precept, and line upon line," from its sacred pages; to pray over it again and again, to pray that they may not only give the assent of their understandings, but the full accordance of their hearts to every maxim which it teaches, to every doctrine which it unfolds, and to the way of salvation, which it opens to man. Many, we know, boldly deny the truth of the inspired volume, without being acquainted with one line

of its contents ; while others virtually do so by their lives, and are equally ignorant of its pages. Others again profess to believe it, and act in direct opposition to all which it requires, while there are some pious persons who *feel* that the Bible is the Book of Life, and yet who have no distinct knowledge of the power of those weapons with which its pages supply them against irreligion, those proofs which would enable them to gainsay the unbeliever ; to produce, in opposition to every argument of the infidel, a powerful reason for the hope that is in them ; and finally compel him to exclaim with the worshippers of Baal, " THE LORD HE IS THE GOD, THE LORD HE IS THE GOD *."

GLORY BE TO THEE, O LORD !

• 1 Kings xviii. 39.

THE END.

